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The hope of glory





## The Hope of Glory

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# The Hope of Glory

And Other Sermons

BY

EDWIN CHARLES DARGAN

*Author of "The Changeless Christ,"  
"The History of Preaching," etc.*



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# I

## THE HOPE OF GLORY

"Christ in you the hope of glory." Col. 1: 27.

**I**T was the delight of Paul's heart that he was the apostle to the Gentiles. He was indeed a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and more than once, in burning language, he declares his deep and intense interest in the salvation of his own people. Yet, though reluctant at first, it was a joy to him that God had sent him to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentile world. He had caught the world-embracing spirit of the Master, whose he was, and whom he served. It was the spirit of a universal religion. It warmed the heart, fired the imagination and flowed out in the life of this great evangelist. As in all of his epistles, so in this, the preaching of Christ to the nations is the pervading thought. The prevalence of some fatal errors concerning Christ among some teachers who had influence with the Colossians led Paul to dwell on the majesty and

glory of Jesus. He sets forth, in strong and glowing terms, the exalted worth and dignity of his blessed Messiah, his own Lord, Jesus, the Son of God. He is the head of all things, first-born of all creation, through whom all things were created and in whom all things subsist. Head of the Church, he is in all things preëminent, making reconciliation for man in his blood shed upon the cross. For the nations of the world this atonement had been made, and Paul himself had become a minister of this world-wide gospel. In the discharge of this high mission he regarded not his own suffering that he might fulfill the Word of God. The secret which had been hidden from ages past was only partially made known to God's chosen people, but now was proclaimed and manifested even to the Gentiles. He calls this a "mystery," but we must remember that he used that term not as we do now, to signify an unsolved problem, but in its proper significance of a secret communicated to those who were initiated into some order or circle. So it was an open secret, a thing kept in the mind of God until the proper time should come to make it known to the world.

Now it has become known. It is the plan of redemption for all the world. God has now been pleased to make known among the Gentiles the riches of the glory of this revealed secret, "which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." How rich is this expression of the gospel! It is a body of divinity and a code of life in one sentence. Let us carefully think what is meant by "the hope of glory" and how Christ in us constitutes that hope.

### I. WHAT IS THE HOPE OF GLORY?

We need not dwell upon the strength and beauty of hope as a quality of our human nature. Thousands of beautiful utterances about it, in both prose and poetry, are found in all languages and literature. No words can be too choice nor too glowing to picture its beauty and its charm. Schiller has sung in immortal verse how hope is born with our infant life, plays about our growing youth, comforts our manhood, and cheers declining age, and even then, when the grave closes down upon the journey's end, we plant above it the fadeless blossom of hope. Other poets and writers have sung and told of its preciousness, yet it is

not a sentiment only. It is a strong principle, in well-known Scripture phrase, "An anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." Of all the hopes we men cherish, and they are many, the noblest and best is that brought to us in the gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus, "The hope of glory." If we can get clearly before our minds what Paul means by "glory" we can then fill and rejoice our hearts with the thought of "the hope of glory."

Glory is a great word, both in the Old Testament and in the New. We cannot here attempt to point out and unfold its various uses in different connections, but it is plainly here used in the somewhat general sense. It is not the glory of any particular person or thing that is here meant. Not exclusively the glory of God, or the glory of Christ, or the glory of the saints, or the glory of heaven. In some sort it embraces all these, indicating a state of things that is supremely good, exalted, brilliant, splendid, and enduring. "The hope of glory" then is the hope of attaining a state of being which is complete and supreme in every excellence. Of course this is itself a very general statement, and we

may try to make it clearer by considering some of the elements which go to make up that glory.

1. For man, glory is to catch up with his nobler tendencies, his best longings after the highest good. It is aspiration achieved. Man is full of outlooks on the better, of stirrings for the higher. His very consciousness of imperfection makes him yearn for the perfect. His sins, when duly considered, make him thirst for holiness, and his limitations, even where no fault is involved, press him with a quenchless eagerness for freedom and power. If we are anything at all we want to be more. Intellectually, a man who prizes mentality, and conscious of ignorance and weakness, longs for fuller knowledge, for clearer light, has a longing that nothing on earth can satisfy. 'A' great teacher once said, in a glow of rapture, "Oh! to sit at the feet of the Master forever, and learn and learn and learn." Morally, a man who sees in himself the capability of being good, and yet looks, with infinite pain on the marred wreck of his own life, feels an unspeakable and unquenchable desire to be good. Even when only dimly conscious of moral

fault, he knows there is something better for him than he has ever reached. The glory of man lies in his intellectual and moral nature. The distress of man is that these, his noblest powers, are limited, and his soul made for the best is hindered, sometimes crushed, by failure and fault. The shame and disgrace of man is that these noblest powers are often thwarted and debased by his own suicidal neglect or perversion. Now show him a state where all these hurts are healed, all these perversions are corrected, all these drawbacks removed, and he can find himself perfectly pure and good forever. That is glory. It is to be all that a soul can be, intellectually and spiritually. It is a state where there will be no more fevered cries, "More light, more light"; no more despairing groans, "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me." Oh! then to us, clouded and darkened as we are, enveloped in mists of ignorance, fettered by painful weakness, forestalled by hills of difficulty, burdened with thoughts of conscious fault, how bright a word is this, "The hope of glory." Sickness and weakness gone, pain banished, sin forgiven and blotted out, death abol-

ished, and the life joyous and triumphant, liberal and free, unfettered and fine, endowed with perpetual youth, and crowned with everlasting delight. This is glory. The hope of it is itself "a joy unspeakable and full of glory."

2. The glory which the Apostle had in mind is not individual and selfish, but is social. The communion of the saints is glory, the association of the perfect is the perfect state. Utopian dreamers have imagined some earthly paradise, where human beings live in love and justice. Every reform, every note of human progress, every widening out of human interests has pointed to the consummate goal of a social state where all men should be good, and none should suffer or bring suffering. The accumulated evils, the festering sores of the body politic, the shameful sins, the inhuman cruelties, the foul vices which have marred the social life of mankind on earth have themselves created sorrow and loathing and the yearning for their removal. If we can conceive of a state where material things, where gross temptations, where rank injustices find no place; but where love and perfect purity have tri-

umphed and shall be forever maintained—that is glory. The rapt Seer on Patmos was vouchsafed some vision of this exceeding excellence, and in the wonderland of the Apocalypse has given to it immortal expression. Golden streets and pearly gates, beautiful trees of life-giving fruits, crystal streams, ringing harps, unfallen angels, redeemed and sanctified spirits, songs that cease not, harps of melting melodies and trumpets with triumphant notes of victory, pageants of splendor—these are some of the notes of prophetic suggestion.

“Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blessed,  
Beneath thy contemplation, sink heart and voice oppressed.

I know not, Oh, I know not, what social joys are there,  
What radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare.”

3. Glory is the vision of God. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” “And his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face.” This is the crown of all. The old theologians talked of the beatific vision, the sight that makes happy. To see the king in his beauty—this is indeed the vision splendid. We know



how a beautiful sight delights the soul beyond words to tell. It may be the majesty of spring, the warm light of summer sunshine, or the gold and purple splendors of setting day, or the simple grace of a fair and fragile flower, or the beauty of a human face, lit with purity and love and peace. We have seen things that make us glad. But who shall say that anything can make a soul so glad as to see God? This is the vision promised in the gospel of Christ. Our human language stumbles and fails in its poor endeavor to express the glory of that vision. Theologians have discussed whether we shall see three persons or only one, whether we shall see only Jesus in his glorified form, or even whether we shall see anything that corresponds to the material sight. All such discourses are futile. There is no need to try to analyze by our poor process of reason, or to express in our weak and imperfect language all that can be meant by seeing God. Surely we know that the vision itself will far surpass in beauty and in joy every image of it that we now can form. To the thinker, puzzled with problems, the ultimate good will then appear. To the artist, striving

for the ideal, perfect beauty will then appear. To the simple soul that knows naught but to look and love, the face of infinite love will be seen. That is glory.

Are these mere imaginings? Is the hope of such a glory as this a mere phantom of the brain, a mere wish of the longing heart? Is there any solid basis for such a hope as this? Yes, it is found in the gospel of Christ. The things of which we have been thinking are embraced in that gospel. The Apostle Paul was a mystic, but withal a very rational and practical man. The hope of glory to him, both as a present experience and as a message of cheer to his fellowmen, was not the baseless fabric of a dream, but a reasoned and joyful expectation. This is involved in the other great thought of the text.

## II. HOW IS THIS HOPE REALIZED?

The answer is emphatic and profound—"Christ in you." Surely this is one of the most comprehensive of all sayings. If we consider well what it means, it will be easy to see how the hope of glory may become and remain a fadeless possession. Perhaps we may catch the profound meaning

of the Apostle by saying that it is Christ known in you and Christ felt in you—known as a historical fact, felt as a personal conviction. The person and work of Christ apprehended among you, as unfolded in the narrative and doctrinal statements of the New Testament, the spirit and influence of Christ felt within you as the experience of your own heart and life.

1. We observe then that “Christ in you” means Christ known by you as a historic person. Let us remember that the reception of the facts of history is always an act of faith. Other things being equal, the further removed the facts are from our own time and observation, the more difficult are they to believe. To the modern mind accordingly, the historic apprehension of Christ is more difficult than it could have been to these Colossian Christians to whom Paul was writing. He himself may possibly (if one brief allusion may be so understood) have seen Christ in the flesh, but if not, he had received his historic information at first hand from those who had been eye witnesses of the life and deeds of Jesus. Hence any apprehension of Christianity as a system of doctrines and code of morals

could not have been to them so distinct from a knowledge of the personal Christ as it is to us. But though it be difficult for our generation to image clearly the historic Christ, it is not impossible. It is the distinct function of what we call the historic imagination to reproduce from the literature concerning any great character such features as are possible. We can never, of course, reproduce perfectly any historic personality. The fullness of the picture depends upon the amount and kind of records available. These records are always of two kinds—descriptive narrative, and more or less analytical presentation of character. In the case of our Lord both kinds of historic evidences are available. The facts of his wondrous life are portrayed in the Gospels, and the impression made by his person upon those who knew him, either immediately or at second hand, are given in the other New Testament writings. Allowing the utmost to that unhappy, destructive criticism, which has been so ruthlessly applied to the New Testament writings, there is abundant material left to make sure the Christ of history. The main features of his character, samples of his mighty works,

transcripts of his notable teachings are ours. Rationally, to accept him as presented in the sources of our information about him is to know him historically.

This knowledge is, of course, incomplete, as all such knowledge must be, but it is very real, and the weight and value of it incomparably great. We know something, and that immensely important, concerning the facts of his life and of his own consciousness. Jesus of Nazareth is one of the most vivid and telling of all the outstanding personages of the past. The knowledge we may obtain and cherish concerning him, though fragmentary, is sufficient for the main and essential facts of his character and career. This knowledge will include the tracery of his character. The man in his purity, his dignity, his strength, his kindness, his love, is revealed to us. The teacher and preacher in his force, his simplicity, combined with depth, his earnestness, his profoundly serious view of life and its meaning, his conviction of the future life and its glory, stands clearly before us. This knowledge will include the facts and significance of his life work. It deals with his deeds in their

mercy and power; in their didactic and exemplary glory. Chiefly it will take in and emphasize that special feature of his work which stood out so clearly in his own consciousness, and is reflected with such tremendous power in the teachings of his authorized spokesmen—that is, his work of redemption. The Christ of history is consummately the Christ of the cross. Let us reflect how valuable is this historic apprehension of Christ as a basis for the “hope of glory” of which we speak. That hope is enwrapt in the historic reality of Jesus as man, teacher and redeemer.

2. “Christ in you” means Christ felt in you as a personal conviction, realized as a personal experience. This, it appears, is the main thing in the mind of the Apostle. Founded in the knowledge of his life and character, it is a deeper and more personal realization of the present living Christ who has thus been brought to our knowledge. Here is something so personal and intense that it cannot be understood by those who are strangers to it. The historic Christ may be the subject of study, but the personal Saviour is that, and more than that. A man can indeed tell others that Christ is

a personal experience with him, but he cannot thereby make him a personal experience to others. He may even tell how Jesus became a personal experience to himself, but at least he will only be describing very imperfectly in language a vital experience that no language can fully express.

There are several aspects in which this great experience must be viewed. First of all, it is the acceptance and constant relation of the personal Christ as a Saviour from sin. This is the first thing, and in some sense, the main thing. In Christ's own lifetime, this already began to be felt by some. But even by these it was only fully understood after his death and resurrection. Peter, speaking for the others as well as himself, acknowledged him as the Christ of God, but in his Pentecost sermon and other addresses, he presented Jesus as the Saviour, accepted by himself, and proclaimed to others. In his epistles also, the historic reality of Jesus mingles with the personal relation to his Saviourhood. Thus it has ever been in the history of God's saints, in sermon and song, in story and treatise, through the centuries the saints have told the story of his love and of their

enthronement of him in their heart of hearts as the one only and sufficient Saviour. This is to have Christ in you, and this is to cherish the hope of glory.

“Christ in you” also means Christ as a rule of life and conduct. Jesus is not only the way, but he is also the truth; not only the Redeemer, but the guide of men. To know his life and teachings is to accept him as model and lawgiver. Knowing his life, and that it was the best the world has ever known, we have an incentive to make our lives like it. They should be like that life, in its superhuman unselfishness, in its high-souled consecration to duty, in its beautiful purity, in its lofty consciousness of its mission. This is what Paul meant when he said “to me to live is Christ,” this is what Jesus enjoined when he said, “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” He in us, and we in him. This is the expression and the condition of a true Christian experience. The more conscious we are of this indwelling Christ, the more real does every hope connected with him become. Thus realized in the life of faith and



trust, Christ becomes indeed to every soul so possessing him the hope of glory. The wonderful presentment of Jesus in the Gospel of John makes this more distinct. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." So Paul assures us that Jesus brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. So an accepted Saviour, tested by life, becomes "the hope of glory" hereafter. From no other lips have fallen so sure and sweet assurances of the life beyond. Through no other helper have come so clear and strong the promises of help and happiness. It is but commonplace to say that the more we realize Christ in our thought and life, the more sure we are of the glory that he came to set before us.

Thus in every way is Christ in us the hope of glory. Whether apprehended within us as a living principle, or apprehended by us as a historical fact; in the former view persuading us of our own immortal destiny, of God's unspeakably precious fatherhood to us, of his own sure

Kingdom of truth and love; in the latter view establishing these concentrated hopes on the sure foundation of a faultless character, the peerless gem of all human history.

Let us now recur to the apostle Paul and his thought. He has spoken of his joy in proclaiming to the Gentiles this Christ in them the hope of glory. Observe how this joy seems to show itself in what immediately follows our text: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ." Yes; no doubt his great soul was stirred within him at the thought that it was his privilege to announce to his fellowmen a hope like this. Did he not feel that it was the highest and noblest of all things men could do, to tell with all the earnestness of his nature how they might be the possessors of this hope? Ah! yes, it was a delight to him to preach this Christ the hope of glory, yet he failed not to be impressed also with the earnest labor necessary for even so delightful a work. He speaks here of warning and teaching every man, he tells elsewhere of his tears and prayers and labors for the

promulgation of this gospel. Furthermore, he deeply felt the awful responsibility thus resting on him and cried out in conscious weakness, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But the secret of his power, and of his calm assurance of a noble success he tells us in this, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Also in almost every letter is expressed his craving for the sympathy, coöperation and prayers of his brethren—"Pray for us, that the word may have free course and be glorified." And thousands of Christ's heralds since Paul have felt—perhaps not so deeply, but yet have felt as he did—the sublime joy and the weighty care of preaching Christ, having in them, too, that trust in Christ and leaning on the brethren which he had. God help them ever so to feel, this being their life-aim—"Christ in you the hope of glory!"

## II

### FRIENDSHIP

And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. 1 Samuel 23:16.

**F**RRIENDSHIP is one of the God-like things in humanity. Human nature shows like God when it is kind, for God is love. Everybody who is worth while has friends. Surely, it is one of the most sorrowful things in this world to be friendless. How do we regard our friends, and how do our friends regard us? How many friends have we? To how many are we friends?

Let us think together of the sweetness and preciousness and the character of friendship. It has been the theme of poets who have sung of it in beautiful terms, of philosophers who have discoursed about it in wise and strong ways, of essayists who have written of it in beautiful language. But it is not to literature nor to philosophy that we look for the right description of friendship. If we ourselves do not know

what it is, and cannot tell by our own knowledge of one another what friendship is, no one else can tell us by definition or essay.

Friendship must have two sides. It is not always equal, but it must be mutual. You cannot think of a one-sided friendship. However, always, or nearly always, in friendship, one gives more than the other. We have grades of friends. We have circles of friends. We speak of our "friends" in a general way. When people are kindly disposed towards us and we are kindly disposed toward them, we say that we have friends. But we draw a line nearer than that and talk about our "particular friends." We draw the circle closer still and talk about our "intimate friends." There are some to whom we give the utmost of our confidence and keep nothing back. Then we may go even beyond that. There, perhaps, are one or two who are more than intimate. Sometimes it happens that they are our other selves. It is this close and profound and loving tie that we especially have in mind when we speak of friendship in the most emphatic way. We think of Damon and Pythias, of David and Jona-

than. We mention these as cases of special self-sacrificing friendship. It is this friendship of David and Jonathan that gives the suggestion that I desire to follow out in our talk tonight.

Friendship like this must be founded in mutual admiration. We sometimes say of certain people that they form "a mutual admiration society," by way of criticism. But after all there is a great deal of truth in this statement. There can be no friendship without mutual admiration. We can love people that we do not admire. For myself, I am thankful that I do not have to like everybody that I love. There must be something to admire. There has got to be mutual admiration. That was certainly so of David and Jonathan. When David came back from his triumph, when he had slain the Philistine and stood before Saul with nothing but his shepherd's tunic about him, armed with the simple sling and smooth stones,—as he stood there mute before King Saul, the Scripture tells us that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David and he loved him as his own soul." Why? Because he admired him. And this soul of splendid young man-

hood went out and grasped with a tie death could not break the soul of another man. Brave spirits they were which recognized that spirit of manhood each in the other. Jonathan was great in himself,—a man that feared not the face of others, that braved his father's wrath for his friend's sake, yet was loyal to him through all. Jonathan saw that beautiful thing of superior manhood and courage in David and he loved him as his own soul.

Then another thing. In true friendship there must be not only mutual admiration but mutual confidence. We must trust each other, and so David and Jonathan fully trusted each other. David would trust his reputation in Jonathan's hands. David knew that he could depend on his friend to protect him even against his father. He knew that he had a friend in court when Jonathan was there. Jonathan would see justice done and he trusted him not in vain. On the other hand, Jonathan absolutely trusted David. He had no doubt whatever that David would perform to the fullest the vow that he made. And he said to him, "When thou art king, and there are any of mine left, be thou true and faithful. He

took the oath of God that he would." There was perfect trust between these two.

Friendship requires mutual sacrifice. That is not friendship in which both parties do not give up something, in which both parties are not willing to surrender something. There is a curious thing about David. You will notice it all his life. He was one of those exceedingly winsome occasional characters which we meet that always seem to get more than they give. He had that attractive quality that makes people willing to give. Why when he was thirsty one day and longed for a drink of water just after a battle, he said, "Oh, that one would give me water to drink of the well of Bethlehem." And three mighty men broke through the hosts of the enemy and brought him water from the well of sacred memories. He was a man for whom people would do things like that. All his life he was like that. Joab and the others about him would not let him go out and fight in his old age. David got more; Jonathan gave more. That was what made the beauty of Jonathan's love. It was his self-giving.



Again, we must remember that friendship necessarily has its emotional side. It means affection. It means tenderness. That is one reason why we ought to cherish friendship. When men grow callous and hard-hearted and indifferent and unemotional, they need the ministry of friendship. I do not like a man that cannot cry. It does me good sometimes to see a man who can sob with emotion. A man who has lost the faculty of tenderness is not the best person in the world to deal with. I would not trust a man that never could weep. David was the more emotional of the two. Yet we must remember how David said, in lamenting Jonathan's death, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." In one of the interviews of these friends, when they had sworn their dying friendship to each other, it is said that they wept upon each other's shoulders "until David exceeded." When you read the Psalms of David, you will see what a wealth of tenderness was in his soul. And so there was a warmth of affection and love and tenderness that existed between the two.

Friendship is not merely emotional, but action in moral sentiment and service. A

friendship that does nothing for a friend is not a friendship worth while. There must not only be self-giving in the loyalty of loving affection, but self-giving in the sacrifice of service. And these men gave that to each other. There was nothing that David had that he was not willing to give Jonathan. There was nothing that Jonathan had that he was not willing and glad to give David. When he first saw David, he had no clothes to speak of, no implements of war, naught but the sling and the stones of the brook. Jonathan stripped himself of his own garments and placed them upon his friend. How he stood by when in anger and jealousy Saul assailed David and drove him out in the wilderness! And through each succeeding attack upon David in court, Jonathan was the staunch friend, supporter, champion. A man who will stand by his friend in his absence is a friend worth while. When David was yonder banished with only some few companions besides the armed men he had, with his life in his own hand, comes this statement of the text: "And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God."

It is the man that comes into the wood, it is the man that comes in the hour of trial, it is the man that comes when others go out, it is the man that comes when we need him most that is our friend. The highest deed of friendship is to arrive upon the scene when you are most needed. When David was in the wood, outcast, alone, broken-hearted, Jonathan came to him in the wood and "strengthened his hand in God." The man that comes to you in the hour of trial to strengthen and help you knows and meets the need of friendship. He does not send you a message or a check, but comes; you do not want messages at such times. You appreciate them in a way, but there is something lacking. You do not care for his financial help, you want the man himself. When you want the sympathetic hand-grasp, when you want the tremulous lip,—these are the times when nothing else will do for friendship but the friend himself.

Someone has said that there is nothing which moves the heart like the approach of a friend. There is a mutual conscious attraction, an enhancement of feeling. It is as the approach of magnet and iron, as

the coalescing of points of light into a warmer and fuller glow. Sometimes nothing needs to be said or done. My friend comes! that itself suffices. It tells me more than words can say; it counts for more than money can buy. Yet this need not mean the failure of words nor the omission of deeds; for with himself the friend may also bring a gift.

Notice what this gift of friendship was. Jonathan strengthened David's hand in God. What did he bring to his friend? Something to eat? News of other friends? Perhaps; but the thing most needed he brought was that he strengthened his hand in God. The highest gift of friendship is to give to our friend a new grip on God. This is more than earthly friendship, more than affection's kindly words, more than admiration's finest compliments. The man who helps me to God is the best friend I can have. The man who strengthens my faith in the time of my deepest need is indeed my friend. And so on the other hand I am best friend to another when I help him to renew and strengthen his grasp upon God. The sweetest friendship in this world is the friendship that brings the

friend to the Great Friend. For a man to claim to be another man's friend and drag that man to hell is awful travesty and tragedy. You are not a friend to the man whom you debauch, and the man who would lead you astray from paths of virtue is your worst enemy. The man who grasps your hand and strengthens you in God is the best friend you have in this world. When you need a saviour, a man who can bring you up out of the dark, that man is your friend. But it is a travesty upon the name of friendship when friends drag their friends to evil. Long years ago when I was a college boy, young and small, and easily teased and bothered, I had some friends that were not very good fellows in many ways. They were "bad boys," as we say. One day when some of the others were saying unkind things to me, and I had as much as I could stand of it, and my lips began to quiver and my eyes to flash and, somehow it seemed that I could endure no more, there was a great big six-footer standing by who laid his hand on the fellow by me and said, "Jake, you have got to let Ned alone, or you can settle with me." The man that helps you to God, that stands by

you when your virtue is tried, that stands by you when you are tempted to evil, that man is your friend,—the man who comes to you in the woods and strengthens your hand in God. The kind of friendship we ought to show is to help our friends to be better than they are, not by criticism, but by kindness. The truest friend is the friend who helps us in the way of righteousness, in the way of salvation.

That brings us to speak of the Great Friend. Jesus allowed himself to be called the Friend of Sinners.

Plunged in a gulf of dark despair,  
We wretched sinners lay,  
Without one cheerful beam of hope,  
Or spark of glimmering day.

With pitying eyes the Prince of grace  
Beheld our helpless grief;  
He saw, and, O, amazing love!  
He flew to our relief.

Down from the shining seats above,  
With joyful haste he fled,  
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,  
And dwelt among the dead.

O for this love, let rocks and hills  
Their lasting silence break,  
And all harmonious human tongues  
The Saviour's praises speak.

He came into our woods and strengthened our hands in God. He came when there was no hand to help and raised us up out of our despair and put a new song into our mouths, even praises unto our God. He is our Friend. What a Friend we have in Jesus! Brother, is he your Friend? And are you his friend? Have you joined in friendship with Christ and accepted the hand reached down for your help and made him your Friend? O, may God help us to be the right kind of friends to each other, and to form and cherish in our hearts the proper return for the infinite and perfect friendship of the Friend of Sinners!

### III

## THE STORY OF TWO FRIENDS AND A FRIEND

Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples ;

And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God !

And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?

He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.

One of the two which heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother,

He first findeth his own brother Simon and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone. John 1: 35-42.

**L**ONG ago, in one of the world's most important ages and in one of the most notable lands that have figured in human story, on the banks of a historic river a great crowd of people was gathered. The center of interest and attractive force that brings this great multitude together is a man. He was a prophet after the order



of Elijah. He was the new Elijah. Rough, coarsely clad, uncourtly, but strong in action and tremendous in speech, he compelled attention and drew the eager attendance of vast and deeply interested hearers. He was no flatterer. He lashed the crowd for their sins, sparing none. Kings, soldiers, officials, scholars, traders, laborers, peasants, loiterers—all received due attention in his fiery utterances.

One day, in the midst of the crowd, the great popular preacher discerned the approaching figure of a young kinsman of his own, whom, if he had known at all, he knew only as a boy and youth of humble place and common occupation. Now, however, a divine intimation, unmistakable and powerful, leads him to recognize in this peasant young man the unique personality of all time; the promised Redeemer of mankind. So moved and instructed he acclaims him as “The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.”

This strange, impressive salutation falls upon the listening ears of two young men who already had accepted the popular preacher as the true prophet of God; the new Elijah, promised of old. Naturally,

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therefore, his unhesitating recognition at once drew their most intense interest to the young man so wondrously acclaimed. This was the beginning of a friendship so fine and fruitful that its issues became and abide the cherished spiritual heritage of mankind forevermore. Modestly told by one of them, without even naming himself, the story of a great spiritual life and influence here begins. The other of the two likewise was attracted and won to faith and friendship. He had a brother beloved—a brother bold, intelligent, active; his own superior in qualities. Full of his new-found joy, he goes to find that brother that he too may share the rising hopes of his friend and himself. Quickly he returns to the presence of the new Teacher with purpose to introduce his brother. But with that marvelous insight characteristic of the great Teacher, he needs no introduction, but discerns at once the character and quality of the man brought by a brother's love to find the best friend. Greeted with a subtle spiritual recognition, this new arrival is accepted and placed. He is a rock. Surprised and wondering, he too finds what the others had discovered. Here then that

day by the riverside these three find each other—two friends and the Friend. Henceforth their lives are twined in a common love and service. They had almost certainly known each other for years. They followed the same business as fishermen upon the lake whereon their home towns were situated. It is often so that friends and associates in some unexpected and sudden occasion find each other afresh, and fuse into a spiritual friendship acquaintance and esteem which had grown out of previous association. Friendship between two may be raised, purified, assured by the forming of a higher friendship with a third.

The story of this triple friendship need not be told in full. Some of its more striking events, familiar as they are, may well engage our thought afresh, and keep before our minds the beauty and value of friendship among good men. The two friends and their new Friend met at a wedding. It is a festive social occasion where fittingly the three young men find place and pleasure. A wonderful thing occurs. The new Friend, applied to by his mother, when for some reason the wine fell short, supplied the lack by miraculous power,

turning the supply of water into the customary light wine, used upon such an occasion. All who witnessed this act of creative power must have been smitten with wonder and admiration. Surely these two friends found here their faith confirmed, and their spiritual perception and acceptance of their new Friend justified. Leaving out the others, we can imagine how the two friends talked over together the wondrous thing they had seen, and the words of which no record remains, but which must have been spoken in the conversations among them.

How many days and weeks may have elapsed before the next scene in the lives of these three occurs we do not know, but the two friends had gone back to their business as fishermen upon the lake. How they had discussed in all its bearing the growth of that acquaintance and friendship! They were waiting for the quickening of friendship into service and to fuller friendship. Nor did they wait long. One day while they are busy with their nets the Friend comes along the well-known shore and summons them, one after another, to leave their business and their toil and be his friends and

associates in his ministry of good to the world. Quickly and decisively they accept this great call, and follow from now until the end of life the mighty Friend. Others too are called into the circle, but these two especially stand out as the closest friends of their Teacher. With one other, they form a group of special intimates, who are privileged to witness some of the more important and significant events in the life of their Teacher. Once they stand as solemn witnesses when the dead girl is raised to life and restored to her father; at another time they wonderingly behold, on a mountain top, the transfiguration appearance of their Master, in company with the Lawgiver and the Prophet of the ancient time; and, once more, these witness, at a little distance, the greatest agony and personal sorrow of their wondrous Friend. Great experiences passed through together welded friendship into an unbreakable bond, so these two intimates stand out above the rest in the special privilege and influence of such scenes.

In their association and activity one of these friends represents leadership and the other love. Not that these were theirs ex-

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clusively, but that by the special quality of each this kind of distinction is justified. One is always mentioned first in the group of associates and stands out in the narrative as spokesman for the rest. Leadership is necessary in any group of active workers. And so, to one of these two friends that place naturally falls. Doubtless many a time in the life and work of these men there came occasions when that leadership must have asserted itself. Certainly there are two great occasions when this strong friend spoke out his soul, and in so doing stood for what his colleagues felt and owned. Once when the Teacher desired to know what was the opinion of men concerning himself, and what was their more intimate conviction concerning him, the leader of the group unhesitatingly asserts their firm acceptance of his highest claims to their faith and loyalty. And on another occasion, when some failed to meet the test of his teachings and were going back, again this noble leader for himself and the rest declares their unswerving purpose to come with him to the end, because in him alone were found the words of eternal life. To the heart of the great Teacher

these expressions of loyalty were the tokens of a friendship at once human and divine, springing out of personal loyalty, but reaching to the heights of spiritual fellowship and devotion. How truly and intensely the other friend entered into these declarations we may take for granted, for love and loyalty are one.

No human friendship is without its flaws. These were not faultless men, and their friendship lacked some elements of perfection. The friend who stood for leadership sometimes presumed upon his position. Once, unbidden and rude, he broke into the retirement for prayer of his beloved Teacher. How strange it is that even friendship sometimes fails in the delicate perceptions that mean so much for sensitive spiritual natures. The hour of prayer disturbed by a thoughtless friend, who thought he had a right to intrude! So often are we reminded that "evil is wrought by want of thought as well as by want of heart." Still worse, the leader was betrayed into presumption when he undertook to tell his Lord what he ought to do and not to do. Sometimes a friend to a great man forgets his proper place, and intrudes with sugges-

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tions or advice, wrong in themselves and presumptuous when set forth as duty to one who knows his duty without being told by an inferior. Such criticisms are a blot on friendship, and the greatest Friend of all was not immune from friendship's mistaken zeal. But the patient Master knew how to understand and forgive such faults even for friendship's sake. Nay, he knew how to be charitable and merciful to even greater lapses than these.

The other friend, the one who stands for love, also made his mistakes. This was he who was especially the object of the great Friend's love, and perhaps the most congenial spirit in all the circle of friendship. And yet he, of all others, displayed on three occasions the temper and spirit most opposite to love. It was he who, narrow and intolerant and jealous, forbade those outside the circle to help the Master's work. It was he who, because of a slight put upon his beloved Master, would have called down fire from heaven to destroy the offending community. It was he who, along with his brother, made selfish demands for himself, and sought at the hands of his Lord a place of distinction and authority among his



brethren. So friendship sometimes fails in its recognition of the spirit of the truest friend. Want of congeniality is a pain where friendship is closest. So we cannot wonder at the Master's stern rebuke, even of his closest friend.

We look with reverent eyes upon the last gathering, in a social way, of the group of friends in which the central Person and these two intimates were the leading figures. Love leaned its head on friendship's bosom, giving, in an hour of deep grief and trial, that human touch of tenderness so needed then. Leadership, alas, mistakenly, now asserted its profession of undying loyalty and devotion, so soon to be shamed. In that trying and solemn interview, these two men, and their characteristic traits stood out among the rest.

Friendship failed when these two, and one other, witnessed at a little distance the bitter agony of the greatest soul of human story. How strange it seems that friends should have slept while the Friend bore his weightiest load of personal grief and loneliness. Of so pathetic a failure in human friendship we can only say it was part of

the price that had to be paid for human sin.

Events move on. The Master is betrayed and led to his trial. The leader rashly draws the sword, and is rebuked. Then, under reaction, becomes fearful, and follows afar off. Leadership falters—love stands. The other friend goes in, and, by some influence, obtains for his comrade entrance into the hall where their great Friend is to be tried. Love is there, but silent and unmentioned. Leadership is there, and breaks down. The severest test of loyalty comes and is not met. What shall we say of a friend who denies his friendship in the time of utmost need? There is no excuse. It was just a failure. But divine friendship will not lose a human friend. In silent grief a look suffices. Friendship has failed, but is not lost. Out in the dark night a broken heart goes to realize its own utter failure, its faults and shameful conduct. In that hour of lonely darkness, remorse and grief, friendship, though shaken, finds itself again. And on the ruins of its weakness, will build a firmer structure.

Leadership falters, fails, but love stands. The utmost penalty of sin is paid on the cross. Love stands by to watch with breaking heart the final scene of divine suffering for human fault. Love receives a son's bequest, and tenderly shelters bereft motherhood in its crowning sorrow. O faithful love! We cannot portray the events of those wondrous three days. We know not where the friends were, nor the details of their doing, but somehow the flying, eager feet of womanhood bring startling news of an empty grave and a risen Lord. Leadership and love are together again. Quickly they fly to the spot where their Lord has lain. Love outruns leadership, but timidly waits at the door of the tomb. Leadership catches up, and asserts itself by entrance. Love follows. And these two friends together see the vacant spot where the body of their great Friend had reposed awhile. What did they say to each other then? What communion of friendship in that place of all others on earth did these two hearts renew and cement? Again the veil of our ignorance falls on these scenes, until one morning, while the two friends had gone back to their daily toil on the historic

lake, out on the water, the eye of love discerns a well-known form amid the mist upon the shore. Love discovers. Leadership at once asserts itself, and first arrives upon the scene. 'Tis not the empty grave now, but the living Lord. In the interview that follows love is taken for granted, but leadership needs a lesson, and that lesson must be the turning of leadership into love. Thrice the searching query, "Lovest thou me," brings back the subdued and shamed but yet confident and triumphant assertion, "Thou knowest that I love thee." Fallen friendship, rebuked and chastened, comes to itself in the assertion of its love, and never fails again.

The details of those marvelous days are not recorded for us. We know the friends must have had constant communication with each other, with their colleagues, and with the great Friend himself. Their final instructions were received. The whole band witnessed the wondrous and glorious ascension of their Lord, and turned back wondering and yet rejoicing from the mountain top to take thought of duty and the future. No more the personal bodily presence of the great Friend was to be

theirs. But the memory of those days and months of intimate friendship were their priceless possession. Along with the others, these two, who stood for love and leadership, went forth to their allotted task, to win the world to him who loved them with a friendship unutterable, and wished the world to share it. Together they stood when leadership proclaimed the risen and saving Christ to Jerusalem's multitude. Together they went to the Beautiful Gate of the temple one day, love and leadership, to meet poverty's distressing need, and without silver or gold, to bestow that which meant everything, even healing and help and health. This is the last view we have of the friends mentioned together, and very little more do we know of either.

One still maintained his leadership, and among his fellow Christians exercised what influence was rightly his in maintaining and spreading his Master's cause. Now led to bring the message of peace to a Gentile home, now lifting back to life a departed saint, now leading in counsel among his brethren—he silently passes from view. History ceases—tradition begins. Only guesswork and inferences remain, and

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these we need not follow. Whatever comes out of the mostly untrustworthy stories which remain goes to show the activity and leadership in many different places of this mighty man of God, at whose word thousands were brought to know his Master and Friend. His tributes in writing to that friendship remain. If tradition be true, he influenced largely one of those who told the tale of the Christ, and in his remaining letters, among other splendid things, we find a word of thanks to God, who renewed us unto a living hope, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

The same obscurity rests upon the later career of the other friend who stood for love. We find him on a lonely isle, banished for his testimony to his Lord. Messages to some of the churches are caught and written down. Flaming visions of conflict and of victory for the kingdom of his King are given him to see and describe. And to his rapt and glowing soul, the last glorious vision of the heavenly Jerusalem is shown, as she, in her gem-bedecked and glorious beauty, is prepared as a bride adorned for

her husband. Love's look sees love's triumph.

Traditions are busy with this friend also. They tell us how he lived to a great age, and spent his loving life in helpful deeds to others; how he rescued a wandering lad from sin; how the sterner side of his nature flashed out against false teachers; and how, at last, triumphant love led the faltering footsteps of age and decay into the assembly of saints, where he could no longer speak at length, but, compressing his whole life into one final exhortation, he would say, "Little children, love one another." It was fitting that his should be the crowning gospel to tell of the love of God that gave his only begotten to save a sinful world. It was fitting that his should be the pen to write that finished definition, "God is love."

Two friends and a Friend: Peter and John and Jesus. We know and love them well, but yet not well enough. One teaches us how friendship, tried by temptation, may fall and find itself again, and last forever. The other teaches us how love, in spite of faults of temper and of mind, may triumph. Both together teach us how love

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and leadership unite to win the world to the Friend of friends, "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." This was their first belief. This was their creed in life; and the realization of this has been their joy in heaven, and is their united message to us. Under the friendship of the great Friend our human friendships, to him and to each other, find at once their basis and their crown.

The Christian ideal of true friendship finds illustration and encouragement in the story. Friends of the common Friend are the more closely drawn to each other because of that tie. The Christian of advanced years and long experience looks back to the friendships of his life with mellowing tenderness and devout gratitude. How many kind hearts have blessed his life with their love! And he looks forward to the renewal and perpetuation of these friendships in the life beyond. No small part of his "hope of glory" is that in a life where no separations can dim its light, no misunderstandings can mar its peace, no faults can wound its joy, friendship with redeemed and perfected souls shall be his forevermore.



## IV

### AN IDYL OF FAITHFULNESS AND LOVE

And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God. Ruth 1: 16.

**I**N the life and growth of a people into a nation, struggle and strife are always in evidence. The times that try men's souls must often recur in the onward progress of a people toward settled government. The history of all nations that have made any history at all affords frequent and sometimes very important instances of this law. Seasons of confusion, unsettled conditions and states of society almost approaching anarchy, present themselves to the student in the progress of all peoples. Often it happens that in the midst of these times of turmoil and distress, like a sheltered flower amid the storm, some incident concerning places or persons occurs to remind us of the more beautiful and peaceful

elements which enter into the life of a community.

In the wonderful story of Israel such a period of disturbance and confusion was that long and ill-defined age which followed upon the settlement of the tribes in the "Land of Promise." The wilderness wandering was over. The consolidated monarchy had not yet been established. Dissensions within and oppressions from without were sad tokens and experiences of the hard struggle toward realizing the national ideal. Now and then some mighty man, and in one case a great woman, would be called by some crisis to rise and encourage the distressed and loosely connected tribes to something like a united effort of patriotism and valor to rescue the imperiled state. It was during this wild tumultuous period of Israel's life that our story, like a calm eddy in a torrent, arrests the sweeping progress of things to fix attention upon the serener and sweeter forces which must ever mingle with the sterner ones in the ongoing of a nation's life.

A family dwelt near the border of the land. Father and mother and two sons lived the simple life of rural people, gath-

ered, as the custom was, into villages or towns for mutual protection and social mingling. They were devout, God-fearing people, as most of their kindred and neighbors were. Untouched, perhaps by the political and military storms of the time, they suffered under a calamity as great as these. Famine smote the land. The country was not infrequently the subject of these visitations. The crops failed; the flocks and herds were diminished; distress, even unto starvation, menaced the families. So this man, taking his wife and two sons, crossed over into the country of the East, where food was more abundant. Misfortune, however, befell the exiles. The husband and father died. The widow, left with her two sons, seems to have remained a good while. The natural result of social contact with the alien people, among whom they dwelt, followed, and the two young men took them wives of the daughters of the land. Still misfortune followed, and soon the two young men also passed away, thus leaving three widows in one home. Bye and bye tidings came of improved conditions in the homeland. In God's good providence the rains were sent again to the

parched earth, and the land was blessed with fruitage and harvests. The good news traveled over the border, and came to the lonely widow's ears. Bereft of husband and sons, a stranger in a strange land, it was natural that she should turn back to the home of her happier days. Among her own kindred she would go to spend her last years. She would seek to recover, under the laws so wisely provided, the little inheritance, which would care for her the remainder of her life. Nothing held her away, but everything called her home. Leaving the ashes of her dead in a foreign soil, with sad heart she craves the company at least a part of the way of those two young women who had been true and loving daughters to her in her exile. It is a gentle picture, sad, and yet not devoid of tenderness and hope, which these three present. Walking slowly across the fields and along the roadways, the three come on to the border which divides their native lands. Here they must part. Good sense and proper feeling shine out in the good woman's dealing with the younger two. It was not fair to ask them to leave their kindred and their memories to go with her to what would be

a strange land to them and a strange people, and with no prospect of good support or of new ties of marriage and of home. Wisely and kindly the aging mother bids her daughters-in-law farewell, and urges them from the border to turn back to their own people. Surely it was the kind and sensible thing for her to do. Without fault or blame one of the two younger women accepts the suggestion of the elder, and bidding her goodbye goes back to her own home and kindred.

The younger of the two, however, lingers still. Affection for the dead and for the sole survivor of that pious family had got the upper hand in her heart and life of those older and less religious ties which bound her to her own people. Into her life, by contact with these strangers, a new hope had come. A clearer vision of God, a holier prospect of life, new ideals of living, mingled with the gentle memories of romance, and with her abiding affection for one so true and good as this elder woman had shown herself to be. Loyal to the new faith and the better love she gently but firmly refuses to leave the lone but beloved one who had proved a mother indeed to

her. And so, in language which has become immortal, she put aside the suggestion of return, and said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." This beautiful saying was more than the firm declaration of an earnest soul of affection and friendship. It was a decisive acceptance of God, of the true God, of whom she had learned. It is confirmed by a form of oath most solemn and strong, that God would punish her to the uttermost if she failed or faltered in her choice. This was the high point in the life of this lovely young woman—the hour of decision for the earthly life and for the life in God. The human affection mingled so sweetly with the spiritual consecration that they became one in her thought and purposes, deciding her destiny for all time. God smiled upon her choice, and held in his gracious hand the coming reward of serv-

ice and love and renown which should be always her own.

Toward that coming realization the events of the story naturally unfold. The two women, footsore and weary, both sad, and yet with a secret joy in their souls, the elder comforted by the younger's faithfulness, and the younger happy in her fixed purpose and glowing hopes, came at last to the old neighborhood; old it was to the mother, strange to the daughter. Old friends saluted her and greeted her on her return, calling her by her sweet name, which meant in the language of the time, "pleasantness." "No," said she, "Call me a name that means bitterness instead. For I went out full, and I have returned empty. Fleeing from famine I went with husband and young sons. Coming back to earthly plenty I came bereft of these, but comforted by the clinging fondness of this dear child, who has left her home to come with me." Recovering her home, or finding a lodging in some friendly house, the elderly widow must seek some means of support from the now rich harvests of the once smitten land. Custom that followed the law of kindness imposed in the law it-

self, made it honest and expected that the poor should follow the harvesters and glean what was left in the fields of the rich. These, divinely taught to use their wealth for other's good, refrained from making a clean sweep of their fields, willingly left corners and skipped places that gleaners might find. How different this from the grasping selfishness that too often marks the ways of mankind. Across that fair landscape the light of this kindness shines where the rich purposely made it possible for the poor to live. Nearby, the broad fields of a wealthy kinsman lay, rich with their harvest of grain. The reaping was now on. The wise mother had told the younger of this custom, and so the younger woman proposed to go forth and find what she might for the food of their little household. And thus she came into the fields of that wealthy kinsman, not knowing what was there in store for her. There is a sweet and gentle picture that would attract the genius of an artist and the verbal skill of a poet. Out from the village near-by, the wealthy man comes to look after the reaping of his fields. With a kind religious salutation he greets the reapers. Not with



the rough word of command, but with the blessings of God, and they answer him in kind.

The greetings of the day over, the wealthy man sees, following the reapers, the graceful form of this, as yet, stranger. Inquiring who she was he receives the answer that it is the girl who had come back with her mother-in-law from the strange country, and had come into these fields to find food for the two. The man had heard of the return of his kinswoman, and of the beautiful, selfsacrificing spirit in which the stranger had come to help make a home again for the lonely exile. Kindly speaking to the girl, the excellent gentleman, for that he was indeed, encouraged her to remain in his own fields and glean all that she could; to come at the luncheon hour and share the bountiful provision made for the workers. He strictly charged the young men not to be rude to the modest stranger, and promised she should not need to go to other fields as long as the harvest was going on. It was a bright scene, and a beautiful day in her life. The kindness, the protection and encouragement that came from this prince among men are what

should ever be the characteristic of the wealthy and well-disposed in the land. Unknown to both, God was weaving the strands of their lives together, and out of mutual respect and kindness it was easy for other things to come. Back to the little home at eventide the beautiful gleaner comes with her apron filled with the results of her day's work, and a portion also of her dainty mid-day meal, reserved for her mother. On inquiry it appeared that she had gleaned in the fields of a kinsman and not of a stranger. Joy filled the heart of the lonely woman when she recognized in this event the good providence of God. So the invitation was accepted, and she gleaned throughout the harvest of barley and of wheat in the fields of this kind and pious man.

Led by the providential circumstances, and understanding the custom and law of her people, the older woman takes counsel as to what should be done. She knew, according to the strange teachings among her people, that it would be the right thing, and perhaps the duty, of this kinsman to claim the widow of his dead cousin as his own, that so the inheritance of the two

branches of the family might not be sun-dered, but welded together, and the name and inheritance of her own son should not pass away from among his people. Meditating upon these things, and assured in her own mind that her proceeding was accordant with the teachings of her religion and the customs of her race, she counsels the naturally shrinking, and yet docile and obedient younger woman to claim her rights.

To us, with our different views of social proprieties, there might seem something immodest both in the assertion of the claim and in the method whereby it was made known, but we must be sure that no one of the three parties to the strange event which followed would act out of the range of perfect propriety. So, as instructed by her mother-in-law, the gentle young woman makes known in the customary way her claim upon a kinsman's respect for law. In this trying interview the character of the man shines out with that beauty which marks it all the way through. Perfect respect for the young woman herself, sympathy for her reluctance and modesty, and yet realization of the rights of one who

stood nearer than himself to her all appear in his conduct. But his heart had been won by the beauty, the fidelity, the diligence, the modesty of this gracious young woman. Readily he will claim his rights provided the prior claim of the other kinsman can be satisfied. This, in accordance with established custom, he promptly proceeds to do, and in full publicity he states the case for the young widow and the inheritance of the departed kinsman. The other kinsman, however, unwilling to complicate the inheritance in his own family, declines, and relinquishes his rights in favor of his friend. So in the providence of God these two admirable characters are brought into that sacred relation of tenderness and romance and affection, upon which the blessing of God rests in all time. Happy at last in the renewed peace of a reëstablished home, she, who had been once the lonely widowed exile, looks with satisfaction and joy upon the wholesome and happy domestic life of which she becomes a part. From this loving and congenial union comes one who was to found in future times the kingdom of Israel. The shepherd and psalmist and king who was

hereafter to reign over a great and strong nation was to derive his ancestry from this devout and loving couple. And farther still down the long vista of time, from the mother's side one was to come who should be "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of the people of Israel."

It is no mistake to call this gem of narrative literature, this faultless story of Ruth, the Moabitess, "An idyl of faithfulness and love." In all literature there is nothing that surpasses it. The simplicity and charm with which the story is told, the perfect naturalness, the high and fine instincts of Boaz and Ruth, the human wisdom and feeling of Naomi, the glimpse of their characters and of interesting social customs, all conspire to make of this story of the time of the Judges one of the best loved tales of gentle romance. But after all, to get the real meaning of the story, we must look not at its end, but turn back to its beginning, in that critical moment when Ruth decides her destiny by accepting the God of Naomi. The turning point in her life was there. She had learned of the true God and of the promises made by him to the people of Israel. Resolutely and

nobly she gives her life, in perfect faith and courage, to this God, and follows whither he leads. The incidental and human elements cluster about this center. All of her life, with its griefs and its joys, its loves and its cares, center about that decisive moment when her soul gives itself up to God. So in our life of today, whatever God's providence may have in store for us, the critical moment is that when we give ourselves in sweet surrender and firm resolve to Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lord. Have we made that decision? If so, it has come to be the center of all our life's experiences, sweet or bitter, wretched or joyful. If we have not made it, now is the hour and the time when, like the heroine of our story, we should yield ourselves to God, and cast our lot among his people who strive, amid the turmoil and the trials of this earth, to live the Christian life and uphold and spread the Christian faith.

## V

# THE STORY OF A BEAUTIFUL GIRL WHO ROSE TO A GREAT OCCASION

Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*;

Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish. Esther 4: 15, 16.

ONE of the many striking features of Israel's checkered and tragic history is the relation sustained by that little country to the great empires of ancient times. The tiny kingdom, in size no larger than our state of New Hampshire, lay on the traffic way both by land and sea. Though without any great port, it was near enough to Tyre to count for something in the commercial world. Through it, from Northeast to Southwest lay one of the great highways of land traffic. Thus the promised land of Israel played its great part, out of all proportion to its size and population, among the

mighty governments of the ancient world. It was a plaything between Egypt, Assyria and Persia. It was overrun by the conquering Greek, and became a part of Alexander's empire, and later it fell to be a pivotal province of mighty Rome. Nor was this worldwide influence confined to the race in its local habitation. The race itself was scattered among the ancient peoples, sometimes as colonists and sometimes as captives. The strange history has been perpetuated, and even to this day the descendants of Israel are interfused among all the nations of the world, yet preserving their race distinction. It is indeed a marvelous history.

At the time of our story the Jews were widely scattered, one large body of them being found at the capital of the greatest world empire then existing. The king of this mighty realm at that time was not distinguished for personal greatness, but for the great eminence of his position as monarch of one of the most widely extended empires known to history. No great nation at that time disputed his supremacy. Magnificence of display in his capital city and his palaces was rendered possible by the



constant flow of revenues from more than a hundred provinces and peoples subject to his mighty sway. Millions of men acknowledged his sovereignty. Wealth and extravagance were the trappings of his glory. Self-indulgence and tyranny were his personal characteristics. Lord of great armies, he was not capable of commanding them in person. Supreme king over many subject peoples, he had little capacity for government, and was the easy puppet of designing ministers and favorites who could flatter his vanity and easily persuade him to cruel deeds. History knows him as Xerxes the Great. But he was really Xerxes the Little, for the splendor of his position is not illustrated by any corresponding greatness of action. Rather is it described by his defeat at the hands of the Greeks and by the folly and weakness of his conduct towards the Jews.

At the height of his splendor, in the third year of his reign, a great review of the provinces and people of his widely extended dominions was held at the royal capital. Captains and lords and men of wealth from all the provinces assembled to witness the royal glory and pay homage to

the majesty of empire. A week was spent in the crowning festivities of that great occasion. Buildings of noble architecture and fine adornment, furniture and decorations of rare expense and beauty, feasts of all dainties and wine of choicest quality marked the brilliant display. Young, vain and proud, no doubt under the influence of drink, the king conceived while merry with wine the foolish whim to exhibit as the crowning excellence of all his possessions, the beauty of his queen. In proper feminine measure she had entered into the festivities of the time, having made feasts to the women of that great concourse. But to come at the command of a half drunken husband and king, boldly to exhibit her charms to an assembly of tipsy men was more than womanly modesty could brook, and she proudly and bravely refused. Provoked beyond measure by this act of disobedience, the foolish tyrant consulted with his lords and decided that such an act of insubordination should be punished by the divorce of the queen, and her removal from her high estate. This was accordingly done, and the hasty anger of the vain tyrant was appeased. The next thing in

order was to find a new queen to take the vacant place.

Among the captive Hebrews at the imperial capital was one of fine lineage and character. He had kindly taken charge of an orphan girl, the daughter of his uncle, and brought her up piously and tenderly, according to the best traditions of his race. He seems not to have had other family, but to have devoted himself with generous affection to this lovely object of his care. We may be sure that she was well instructed in the history and religion of her people. Our Western and Christian sentiments can find only repugnance and horror in those oriental practices and laws which tolerated the polygamous custom of the harem. It was for the monarch to choose from among the maidens gathered into the royal harem one who should be designated as queen, and made the prime favorite of the royal rake. We can only be shocked that the pious Hebrew uncle of this beautiful and beloved girl, who was to him as a daughter, should have so far allowed his worldly ambitions to override the fine religious scruples of his better instructed race as to permit him to offer his ward as a can-

didate for the royal favor. Disdaining the artificial aids customary at that time, the fair Jewess presented herself, only in the beauty of her perfect health and native charm. The king was captivated by her loveliness, and doubtless pleased with her modesty, intelligence and general behavior. Among all those offered for his royal choice she obtained the palm, and was advanced to the dignity of queen. Not yet had she disclosed her race and people. Then, as now, that would have been to her disadvantage, because of the prejudice against her nation; for this has been the singular portion of this remarkable people. Wherever they have lived, they have lived apart, to be a prey and the scorn of those among whom they have lived. This reticence was in accordance with the instructions of the new queen's uncle, whom she still regarded as a father. Her high place did not turn away her affections or her obedience, as far as it could be rendered, from him who had brought her up and obtained for her the great opportunity of her life. The guardian, on his part, showed every solicitude for the welfare of his young ward, and frequently came to the

gate of the palace to make inquiries concerning her. One day it befell, while waiting at the gate, that he overheard a plot that was being formed between two disaffected servants of the king. He promptly informed the queen, who made it known to the king, and thus his life was saved.

At this time there was a certain high officer in the king's court whose promotion, as has been so often the case, fed his swelling pride to the bursting point, and made him a vain and jealous fool. He noticed as he passed in and out of the royal palace that the queen's kinsman and guardian failed to offer him the homage which he conceived to be due to his rank. This apparent disrespect wounded his jealous soul and embittered him, because, as a famous lecturer once expressed it, he was "one bow short." That missing bow, trifle though it was, like so many other apparent trifles, was the little hinge of a great event. The life of a people, and the heroism of a queen revolve upon it. Hatred grew from the man to the race. Nothing short of wholesale destruction could satisfy the vindictive rage, jealousy and hatred of a cold-hearted, blood-thirsty royal favorite.

So this pampered lordling, in the heat and passion of his narrow and vindictive soul, sought as a favor to himself the life of the scattered race. Flattering the king's petty vanity and pride of power, he offered to pay into the royal treasury a magnificent sum as the price of a people's life. We can scarcely conceive how a king could have granted so cruel, senseless and wicked a request. Did we not know from other historic instances of cruelty and tyranny in monarchs, responsible only to their own selfish and vain whims, it would indeed be incredible. Even today, making all just allowances and deductions, it stands glaringly true before the eyes of startled humanity that one, and no insignificant element, in the present terrific world conflict, is the pride of imperial dynasties.

Strange as it may seem, the royal order, at the request of this high-placed but cruel-hearted officer, went forth to accomplish in every province of the mighty empire the destruction of this scattered and hated people. The royal court went about its pleasures and its business, while swift messengers flew into every province, bearing the order that was to bring death and

gloom in every Jewish home. The king and his wicked favorite sat down to feast, but the city was perplexed.

The pious Jew and his royal ward received, in their different ways, the horrible news. To the man, in his lonely home, and later waiting at the gate, clothed in sackcloth and ashes, the bitter, bitter news of his people's threatened doom came as a crushing blow. To the beautiful queen, in her apartments, surrounded by her attendants, the message was borne, and fell a baleful shadow over the splendor of her royal state. Quickly she dispatched messengers to her grieving kinsman, that she might know the utter truth. Now that wise observer saw the supreme opportunity that had come to her who had been the darling object of his life. Perhaps it was some prevision of advantage to his people that had led him to sacrifice to royal admiration the sweet child of his care. It would not do to say that he had foreseen such a calamity impending as this. Yet, knowing the prejudice against his race, he probably had forecast some emergency in which it would be highly useful for him and his scattered people to have a friend in court. That

hour had arrived. On the shrinking feminine shoulders of a fair young girl the fate of God's chosen people was hanging now. Never before or since did a maiden so fair meet a crisis so fine. To every girl comes that sweet time when, "standing with reluctant feet, where the brook and river meet," she must take the path that leads to womanhood's responsibilities. Often too, in life's great and perplexing mazes of duty and trial occasions arise to put a woman's heroism to its utmost test. Women are brave, brave indeed; brave as men often are not, and would not be. It was meet and fitting that the faith, fidelity and fervor of a woman's heart should be called to respond to duty at such an hour as this. It was inevitable that she should shrink. Any woman would, or, for that matter, any man, but shrinking is not cowardice; reluctance is not refusal. To guardian and ward alike, the bitter, yet splendid, hour has come. What it cost the man to send such a message, what it cost the girl to make her answer, even though delayed, we can perhaps imagine. To her messengers her best beloved friend said, "Presume on your favor with the king; go in unbidden



to the royal palace, and request, at any cost to yourself, the life of your people, scattered far and wide." We do not wonder that the girl's heart at first failed her; that she sent back another message that it was death to approach unbidden to the royal throne unless the scepter was extended. For some reason, she knew not what, she had not been summoned to the royal presence for several days. It might be he was displeased with her. It might be his royal fancy had suffered fickle change. It might be he had discovered that she was of the hated race, and had consented to her doom, along with that of her people. Fears like these would be natural to anyone, especially to a young girl, timid and inexperienced. What should she do? She sought her guardian's counsel, begged that he and all the group of their people should fast and pray while she and her maidens would do likewise. Then rising to a moral height which far outshone the splendor of her royal state, she made her great, historic answer: "And so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to law, and if I perish, I perish." This was no child's play, but a woman's answer, great and

strong. Never from human lips, masculine or feminine, has fallen any sublimer utterance than this. The perfection of heroism and self-sacrifice are here. Not to her earthly queenship, but to her spiritual queenliness we pay our just and cordial respect. Brave, splendid girl; beautiful soul in a beautiful body; dignity and strength of character surpassing royal place and power—this is her meed of praise. The name given to her in her babyhood signified Myrtle, fragile and fragrant plant, but that which glorifies her queenly state in many languages means star. And like a star indeed she shines in the galaxy of womanhood, Esther the Queen.

Having gained her own consent and chosen her path after due meditation and prayer, the brave and glorious girl wisely undertakes her perilous task. She makes her plans and acts them out. One thing shall follow another. There shall be no harm done by pressing of her plea. Wisely she plans and nobly she wins. After a few days, clad in her most attractive costume, she ventures unbidden into the royal presence chamber. She takes her position near the entrance, shrinking against the

wall. The king, sitting in state upon his throne, holding audience with his court, charmed with her beauty and her modest demeanor, stretched forth the golden scepter in token that her visit was welcome. She drew near and touched the extended token of majesty. Knowing that this meant some kind of petition or request, the king inquired what it could be that brought the queen to him as a suppliant. She was too wise to make known her real request at first. It was a hazardous thing to venture even a slight petition, and she must not go too fast. She kept back for the present the main great motive that brought her there, so accordingly invited the king, and his minister of state, her wicked enemy, to come this day to a banquet in her apartments. During the banquet the king, knowing that something was still in the mind of the queen, asked again what was her request. Not yet was she ready to present her petition, but begged one more day's grace. She promised if they would do her the favor of coming to her banquet again upon the morrow she would make known her request. Events pass rapidly. The cruel, vain, heartless minister is puffed up

with pride at being the guest of the queen, little knowing what was awaiting him.

Meantime that night the king could not sleep, and in his insomnia, requested that the annals of his reign should be read to him. Therein account was taken of how the guardian of his queen had revealed a plot against the king's life. Surprised that no reward had been given the man for this information, the king, smitten with a sudden sense of justice, determined that next day due honor should be paid to the man whose timeliness had preserved the threatened life of the monarch. The rest of the dramatic story hastens on to its goal. In audience next day the king demands of his minister what should be done to the man whom the king delighted to honor. In his conceit, imagining himself to be the person intended, he makes reply of what ostentatious display of respect should be shown to such a man, almost reaching that accorded to the monarch himself. The king then informs him that the person meant was he whose fidelity and vigilance had detected and denounced a plot against the king's life. Mortified and downcast, the crestfallen minister proceeded with a heavy foreboding to

the banquet of the queen. There once more and finally the king asks his royal consort to make known her petition. In thrilling language she discloses the horrible plot in the presence of the minister himself. Rising in dignity and courage she shows to the king how he had been duped through the hatred of his minister into consenting to a murderous, unnecessary, outrageous decree of extermination against an innocent people. Incensed beyond measure, the king decrees that the fallen minister should be hanged upon the gallows that his cruelty and pride had prepared for his opponent. It was against the law and custom, however, that any decree of the king, however, unwise, should be reversed. Strange and cruel as the custom seems to us, it had its justification that the laws, which were not made by the people, but proceeded from royal decree, should be made permanent and not subject to fitful change. In many cases this custom worked hardship, as in this. But it was the established principle of that great monarchy and it could not be altered. However, sagacity found a way to counteract the decrees which could not be annulled. So the king proclaimed that

the Jews should have authority in every place where their lives and property were attacked to resist and stand for themselves. Thus having the royal approval and favor back of them, they made heroic resistance to the decree throughout the length and breadth of the empire, and for several days withstood their enemies and triumphed. Great was the victory. The prime enemy was removed, the stigma upon the people was lifted, the good guardian of the queen was promoted to high honor, and she herself became the admiration of her people and of the kingdom. Rich and deserved was her reward; rich and deserved also her historic fame. High among the noble women who by courage, fidelity, intelligence and self-sacrifice, have met great opportunities and triumphed over great difficulties, stands the honored name of Esther the Queen.

Though of studious purpose the name of God is omitted in the remarkable book which tells the story, we know that religious faith lay at the basis of the actions of Mordecai and Esther in this great crisis of their people's history. It was because he and his compatriots, and she and her maid-

ens had fasted and prayed that she was able to take and carry out the splendid resolution which marks the turning point in her career. It was noble courage and unconquerable faith that made it possible for this timid yet faithful soul to rise to the height of her opportunity and risk her life for the safety of her people.

National and religious history alike afford many notable examples of the lofty heroism of women. Surely these recent days have shown anew what woman can dare and do, and endure in the perilous days of war. But the days that follow war, the readjustments in the racial, political, social and religious affairs of the world that must now be made, demand the highest type of womanly sagacity and courage. The right of suffrage and the opportunities of business open a new world to women in our times. Faith in God, fidelity to herself and her people, clear intelligence, prompt and decisive action, and the courage that for Christ's sake risks and conquers—these are what the world expects of the woman of to-day.

## VI

### CHILDREN AT PLAY

"And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Zech. 8:5.

"Like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows." Matt. 11:16.

**W**HEREVER there are cities there are children, and wherever there are children there is play. These two passages from the Bible, one in the Old Testament and one in the New, speak of children as they play in the streets and open places of the city. Children in old times were not so different from children in our time. The first one of these texts is from the prophet Zechariah. He was telling about what would be in Jerusalem when the people who had been taken captive and carried away should be brought back again. He was thinking about how the loved city that had been destroyed should be rebuilt, and how once more the life and doings of the people should be much as they had been before the terrible destruction and captivity had occurred.



Among other things, he mentions that there should be very old people in the city, and also very young people. That means, of course, there should be people all in between. One of the signs of a city's life and prosperity is the presence and play of children. So it is not surprising that this good old prophet should have mentioned the play of children in the streets as one of the things to which the returning captives should look forward. That would be a very lonesome town in which there were no boys and girls to play in the streets and parks where it was proper to do so.

In the second passage, from the book of Matthew, we have a saying of Jesus. This was many, many years after the prophet Zechariah had written about the playing children. Jesus was speaking of the way the people acted toward John the Baptist and himself. They criticised John for doing one way and Jesus for doing just the other way. The people could not be suited either way. So Jesus said they were like children playing in the markets—that is in the open squares, somewhat like our parks—and quarreling with each other over their games. They said, “We cannot do to suit

you anyway. We played lively music and you wouldn't skip, and we played mournful music and you wouldn't cry." That's the way children do sometimes when they get cross. Anyhow, it is an interesting thing to think of Jesus watching children at their play, and drawing a lesson from it. So when we put the meaning of both these texts together we find that the Bible has something to say about the play of children in the streets, and that is what we are to think about for a little while.

The first thing for us to think about is that too often there is something bad in children's play. When Jesus saw the children playing, he noticed that they were a little quarrelsome and hard to please, and couldn't be suited. We all know how that is—children and grownups both—for the grownups haven't forgotten how they used to be selfish in their play, and they have to reprove the children many a time for not playing nicely. Jesus doesn't like bad playing. It is wrong in our play to insist on having our own way; to get into the pouts and refuse to join in because the play is not what we proposed. Isn't it a pity for our ugly tempers and our selfishness

to get into our play and spoil it? Why play ought to be full of fun and gladness. Nothing that is good ought to be spoiled. You don't like spoiled fruit, do you, nor spoiled butter? Well spoiled play is bad too, and it is spoiled whenever one boy or girl, or one side, wants to have it all their way and nobody can do to suit anybody else. The playground is the place where character, that is the kind of boys and girls we are, always shows itself. Sometimes play may not only be selfish, but too often it is rude and coarse, and that is worse yet. Boys ought to be little gentlemen, and girls little ladies in their play. What we learn to be on the playground we are very apt to be when we grow up. If we are rude and selfish and hard to please at play, we are more than likely to be that at work when we grow up. In this way we shall make ourselves very unhappy, and what is worse, make other people unhappy too. The playground is a fine place to develop character; that is, to learn how to hate what is bad and love what is good, to control ourselves, make ourselves mind.

There is another thing we must remember, and that is that Jesus watches us while

we play. He knows how we feel, and what we say. If we are bad and cross and selfish and hard to please, he knows it, and he doesn't like it. He was never that kind of child himself, and he wants children, in their play as well as when they grow up and work, to be like himself. The playground is a good place to show how unselfish and patient and kind and gentle we can be.

This brings us to think about the good side of play. It was this that the good prophet Zechariah had in mind when he thought of the beautiful city being built up again, and full of happy boys and girls playing in the streets. A city which has great buildings and factories, and wide streets and a great many people living in it, and a great deal of business going on is a fine thing. But did you ever think how lonesome and strange a city would be if there were no children to play in it? Now of course there are some parts of the city, where children ought not to play. Where there is much business going on, and many wagons and automobiles, it is dangerous and improper for children to play. And then there are beautiful parks which would

be injured by playing upon them, and sometimes the noise of play may be disagreeable to the people living in certain places. All these things must be thought of. But every city should provide playgrounds for children, or permit their play in such streets and parks as are suitable for that purpose. Some of the cities in Europe, and in our country too, are doing a great deal in this direction. In Chicago there are many beautiful parks and places on the lake front where thousands of children may play. In some parts of some cities, as in New York, where there is so much confusion and crowding, it is hard for the children to find a place to play. Some years ago there was a good man in New York named Jacob Riis, and he was much concerned because the children in the crowded parts of the city couldn't find places to play, so he got the people to do something about it. He was the children's friend. The school houses and yards were made so children could play in them, and roof gardens were made and fixed so they would be safe for the children to go up on the house tops and play in the fresh air. Every city ought to take care of the health of its chil-

dren, and so provide playing places for them. On the other hand the children should not abuse their playgrounds. They should avoid rough, selfish and bad conduct on the city's playgrounds. All ought to try to play right, to play fair, so that the people of the city will be proud of their playgrounds, and not find them a noisy nuisance. Certainly the older children, especially those who are Christians, should take care of one another, and of the little ones, and not be cruel and unkind to them in the playgrounds. If the playground is a pretty place, it is a place for pretty conduct.

When we think of these two texts together, we may think of the second as a fulfillment of the first. Zechariah the prophet saw in his imagination a new Jerusalem, full of boys and girls playing in its streets, and it was a happy thing to him to think that joyful daily life should again be found in the city that had been destroyed. So when Jesus came to that Jerusalem which had been rebuilt, as he walked its streets he found the children playing in it, and saw what the prophet promised come true in the actual Jerusalem in which he lived and worked. It is true that the play

was not perfect, but Jesus wanted to make it so. He wants all our cities to be full of good boys and girls, happy in their play because they are unselfish and sweet in their games. Now the real Jerusalem was God's city, and sometimes in the Bible heaven is spoken of as the New Jerusalem, the Holy City of God. And so I think it is not out of place for us to think of heaven as a glorious home and city where boys and girls are happy in their play. You know in the book of Revelation some wonderful descriptions are given of the heavenly city. Thousands and thousands are there, singing God's praise, and rejoicing in him and one another. There used to be a little hymn that was sung very much when I was a child, and I loved it greatly.

“Around the throne of God in heaven,  
Thousands of children stand;  
Children whose sins are all forgiven,  
A glorious, happy band.”

I believe there is truth in what that little hymn says. Many, many children die, and their spirits go to heaven to be with Jesus, and that heavenly city is full of those children who are not bad any more. Jesus has

made them perfectly pure because they have loved and trusted him here in this life. I do not think it could be a perfect heaven if there were no happy children there. And though it pains us to part with them here, it gives us joy to think that they are happy, and we shall be happy with them when God brings us home to himself. There is only one way to make sure of being happy in heaven forever, and that is, as you know, to take Jesus for our Saviour; to give our hearts to him and love him and do what he says. Jesus loves children and he wants children to love him. And so if we do give ourselves to him and try to be in everything, even in our play, just what Jesus wants, he will make us happy here in this world, and then afterwards he will take us to be with him, and with all the good people. And so we must think of heaven as a glorious and beautiful place, full of happy saints who have been old, and middle aged, and even little children, who somehow will continue to be what they were, only changed for the better. There will be no more badness, no more crossness, no more selfishness. We do not know just what the saints and the happy children will be doing, but



we do know that something like play will continue for the children, and they will be perfectly happy. And heaven itself will be all the brighter because the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls, rejoicing forevermore.

No doubt a number of older persons here to-day have sweet and tender reason to think of the children in heaven. It is a comfort beyond words to feel sure that our loving Saviour has received our little ones, sundered from us by death, into His own presence and keeps them for our coming.

“My Lord hath need of these flowerets gay,”  
The reaper said and smiled;  
“Dear tokens of the earth are they,  
Where He was once a child.”

## VII

### TALITHA CUMI!

"Talitha cumi." Mark 5: 41.

**T**HIS is a strange text, isn't it? You never heard this language spoken. Nobody speaks it now, exactly as it was spoken in old times. It is what is called a dead language. Doesn't it sound odd? But you know who said it, don't you? It was Jesus. Shall I tell you the story how he came to say these words that seem so strange to us? You know that when Jesus lived here on earth, because he was the Son of God he could and did do many very wonderful things. He could make sick people well just by speaking to them or touching them, and very many people came and asked him to make them well, or their friends. One time there was a man named Jairus, who was a very nice man, and he was highly thought of by the people. He held a high position in the synagogue. That was a kind of church. He was

a very good man too. He had a little daughter, twelve years old, and she got very, very sick. Now he had heard somehow that Jesus could make sick people well, and so when he heard that Jesus was nearby he left his home and his little sick daughter, who was about to die, and went in search of Jesus. He felt that if Jesus could just get there to the house before the little girl died he could make her well again, as he had done to others. So he came to Jesus, and begged him that he would come and lay his hand on her. Jesus went, and his friends went along with him. It took him a good little while to get to the house, because there were so many people that they crowded around him, and a poor sick woman stopped him to cure her. Don't you know Jairus was worried because of the delay? How anxious he was! And sure enough, before they could get home to the little girl she died. Some of the servants, or friends, from the house came and told Jairus that it was not worth while to trouble Jesus any more, for the child had died. They did not have any idea that Jesus could make her live again, and it may be that Jairus felt that way himself. But

Jesus knew that he could not only make people well, but could bring them to life again, and he was so sorry for Jairus that he paid no attention to what these people said, but told him not to be afraid, but only believe in him. I dare say Jairus was not perfectly satisfied, but still he trusted the Lord, and they went on to the house. On coming to the house they found a crowd of friends and others who were weeping and crying and making a great noise because the child was dead. That was a curious way of doing in those days. They even hired people to come and play sorrowful music so as to make them cry. This all seems very strange to us. We would rather be quiet in our sorrows. But even now there are some people that like to have a great outcry and do not know how to control themselves when there is trouble like this. But Jesus did not like it, and he told those who were playing on instruments and crying out to stop making all that noise. He said, "The child is not dead, but is asleep." Of course she was dead, and they knew it, and Jesus knew it, but he knew he was going to make her alive, and that she was lying there so still and sweet

that it looked as if she was only asleep. No doubt he said this also to comfort the father and the other loved ones, as well as to rebuke those who were making the noise. But the people who were there for curiosity and to make an occasion of the funeral broke out laughing. Think of that! They just laughed at Jesus for saying she was asleep. They did not understand what he was going to do. He made those fussy people go away, and took the father and mother of the little girl, and his nearest friends, Peter and John and James, and went into the room where the little girl was lying dead.

There she lay, just as though she was asleep, still and lovely, and Jesus must have felt very sorry for her parents, and yet very glad that he was going to bring her back to them. Then it was that he took the child by the hand and said these beautiful words to her, which seem so strange to us, "Talitha cumi." You know what the words mean? "Maiden, arise." And then we are told that her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately. Wasn't that wonderful? Don't you think her mother must have kissed her, and her father, and

were full of joy and thankfulness that Jesus should have done even more than to make her well from sickness, but called her back from death just the same as if he had roused her from sleep? Then there is another thing to remember here. He told them to give her something to eat. There is a noticeable thing about people when they are getting well from sickness, and that is they get very hungry because they have been made weak by the disease.

Jesus knew the little girl must have good nourishment. Can't we imagine how gladly that mother went to prepare something for the little girl to eat? That's something mothers like to do, and probably no mother in all the world ever prepared nourishment for a child who was getting well with more joy than did this wife of Jairus. Then we must think about the little girl too; how strangely she must have felt. Why she was twelve years old, and so could understand things, and she knew something that none of us know. She had died. Her spirit had left her body and had come back. Don't you suppose she would talk to her parents and friends about that wonderful experience? Nothing is told us about it in

the Bible, but we just can't help thinking how wonderful a thing it was to come back from the dead. I have no doubt she lived a very happy life, and loved Jesus all her days. Nobody could ever have done that for her but Jesus only. Now we must think of some things this story teaches us.

First of all, it makes us feel very sure that Jesus loves children, and that he cares when they are sick. Children are often sick. A great many are sick in New York now, with a very strange disease.\* And we must know, that though Jesus is not here in the body, yet he cares up in heaven when the children are sick; and when we get sick we ought to think that Jesus can be near us in our thoughts, and that he likes for us to think of him and to want him when we are sick. Somehow we think of the little girl in her sickness rather than as having died, because she was dead only a very little while, and it was as if she had dropped off to sleep and waked up again. What we need to think about is that Jesus can be with us and help us in sickness and in death too. Sometimes children die, and it is a great comfort to their parents to feel

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\*Infantile Paralysis, July, 1916.

that Jesus is with them, though he is not in the body to talk with them, or to heal the sick by the touch of his hand. But when there is sickness and sorrow in the home we can feel very sure that Jesus comes just as he did to the home of Jairus. How much we need Jesus when we are well, as well as when we are sick. We need him always, and then when we come to die we shall need him most of all, for he knows how to take care of us even then, and to make us live on in another way. It is only Jesus who can bring us through death to the happy life beyond it so as to make death itself seem but a little sleep. Let us love and trust him always so that in sickness and in death he will be near us to help us.

The next thing we must think is that Jesus can make us well when we are sick. We must have a doctor and sometimes the nurse, and we must take medicine and try to get well, but when we really do get well it is because God blesses the medicine. Sometimes sickness is a good thing for us. If it makes us think of God, and of our Saviour, it may be a blessing to us all our life. Perhaps some of you already know about



this. I am sure there are many people who have been brought to God through sickness. Somehow they have learned how nobody can help us as much as God, and then when we get well and feel that he has helped us through our illness, we love him for it, and want to do something for him. How we want to show our thankfulness to Jesus and also to the doctors and nurses who have helped us in our sickness. I must tell you about a good old doctor that I knew once. He was a very kind man, and everybody loved him in the neighborhood. A little boy got sick, and his parents were very poor and did not know how to take care of him. So this good old doctor not only came to see him, but stayed a long time when he came, and helped to nurse him and show his parents what to do. The little boy got well, and he and his parents both were very thankful to that good doctor, as they ought to have been. One day the doctor drove by the house, and the little boy knew he was coming back that way, so he gathered some apples in a little bag, and had them ready, and when the doctor came back he ran down the hill and got the doctor to stop and poured out the apples in the buggy. It

wasn't much to do. The apples were not very good, but they were all the little boy had, and that was his way of showing his love for the doctor. The good doctor liked it very much. He was very much touched, and said to his friend, "Gratitude is better than money." So when Jesus makes us well we ought to try to make him glad.

Another lesson we must learn is that Jesus can cure us of our sins as well as of our sickness. He can help us to be good as well as to get well, and that is the main thing he came into the world to do. He can touch us in our souls just the same as he took this little girl by the hand, and say "rise," and he does this in our conscience when there is something inside of us that says we must quit being bad and come to Jesus. That's Jesus saying, "Get up, be something, do something for God." Sin is described in the Bible as sickness and as death. Paul speaks of being dead in trespasses and in sins, and our souls in a way may be like that; dead to goodness. That's right hard for children to understand—for anybody indeed—but it's something like that when we are bad. The good in us is dead, and it is a terrible sort of death.

But Jesus can make us alive out of the death of sin. That is what we need more than bodily life. It is to be alive to God; to everything that is good.

Still another thing is that we must do what Jesus says. Suppose the little girl's soul had refused to come back to the little body! What a strange thing that would have been! She was dead, and yet somehow her soul could answer and come back when Jesus told her to get up. And it's just that way with us in our sins. We do not feel strong enough to be good, but if we really answer when Jesus calls us, he can make us alive in our hearts, just the same as he made the little girl alive in her body. But I think the little girl must have been glad to answer back to Jesus and come and live again to make her parents happy and to serve the Lord through her restored life. And even so it must be with us when Jesus makes our souls alive. We should answer back and say, "Yes, Lord, I will try to live the Christian life, and be what you want me to be, and do what you want me to do always."

The last lesson we must learn is that Jesus took care of the little girl when she

got up. He told people about to give her something to eat. She was very weak and she needed food. And so it is when Jesus makes us well in our hearts and minds. He tells good people to take care of us. Our parents and loved ones, and our Sunday school and our church are they who should feed our souls. The food is the Bible. God tells us in the Bible what he wants us to know, and to be, and to do. It is by learning and doing what the Bible says that we grow strong in soul, in character, in life.

So may we all hear and heed when Jesus calls us to life from our sins, and then may we feed upon his word that we may be strong to serve him all our days!

## VIII

### THE STORY OF A GREAT HERO WITH A FAULT

And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezrite : and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. Judges 6 : 11, 12.

THAT dark age of Hebrew history known as the period of the Judges was dragging its weary length through the centuries. The lapses of the people from the true worship and service of God had again and again brought disaster and oppression. At the time of our story the land lay under the tyranny and robbery of the wild Arab peoples to the East and South of Palestine. We are unhappily only too painfully aware of how cruel and destructive these Eastern peoples could be. The cry of the Armenian in this twentieth century has been lifted to God and man against the unspeakable cruelties and oppressions of the Turk. We used to

say that such savagery belonged to ancient, uncivilized peoples, but the world stands aghast at the spectacle of such horrors as our own time is witnessing.

The scattered, enfeebled people of Israel were an easy prey to the fierce and warlike hosts of Midian. Fields and homes were ruthlessly desolated. The growing crops were trampled under foot. The gathered grain was seized and carried off, the flocks and herds driven away. The people were left in poverty and despair. Near the center of the country, in the half tribe of Manasseh, to the west of the Jordan, there was a family of considerable importance. A father was blessed with a number of fine sons. All of these had been slain by the ruthless conquerors except one, who somehow had escaped. One day, accompanied perhaps by his servants and his own youthful sons, he had hidden himself beside the winepress to escape the notice of his foes while he threshed out the scanty remains of his wheat harvest. Perhaps while thus furtively engaged, his devout soul was lifted in prayer to God for his downtrodden people. While the others were perhaps out of immediate touch, or he had

sought some hidden spot to pray, a messenger from the skies draws near and salutes the brave, strong man with these strange words: "God is with thee, thou mighty man of valor."

Without any irreverence or distrust the plea of the patriot comes first to his lips when he replies, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" This natural and pathetic remonstrance brings a reassuring word from the heavenly one: "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hands of the Midianites." What a salutation! Here was manifest destiny. Here was the awakening of a heroic spirit. Here was the divine summons that comes but once in a lifetime for a man to gather up his best manhood, his whole intense, throbbing selfhood for the supreme task that awaits him. The spark is slowly kindled. The modest and reluctant hero still argues. Not quite satisfied, but burning and yearning in his soul, he pleads for a little more time. He asks the heavenly visitant to wait and receive an oblation at his hands. He would parley longer with his celestial guest and gain

more of hope and heartening for the tremendous undertaking that lay before him. Returning with his oblation he lays it down under the tree upon a rock. The angel smites it with his staff. A flame shoots up to burn the sacrifice, and the messenger retires. Like many another man, conscious of sin and realizing the immediate presence of God, the hero was smitten with awe and wholesome fear of the divine. But God spoke in the innermost sanctuary of his being and gave him peace. There between God and a great soul a partnership of power was made, and already in Israel's night the first faint streak of dawn appears.

One of the causes of Israel's overthrow had been neglect and denial of God. The idolatry of the surrounding peoples, their own too easy consent, had brought in forgetfulness of God, decay of religion, growth of superstition and all sorts of corrupt practices. Any man who would lead Israel to deliverance and victory must make his break with existing entanglements. This was no time to palter with evil, to speak soft words of compromise with the forces of sin and decay. Promptly the fine



intelligence and heroic soul of this great leader saw this point. That very night, in his own father's town, where idolatry had entered, he broke down the altar of the strange god and cut to pieces the idolatrous images about it. Astonishment took hold upon the people next morning when they saw what had been done. He was not a man to deny his deed, but faced the angered crowd and acknowledged the act as his. Among the many heroic deeds of this man's life this stands out. When a man can face his own friends and kindred in a daring act of righteousness which is opposed to their apparent interests and to their feelings he proves himself a hero. This was the decisive deed and turning point in the man's career. What followed was but the large development of this splendid and heroic action. His own father, and a few choice spirits defended the man and his deed. The hour had struck.

While this was going on in one family and village, the great hosts of the conquering enemy, having crossed the Jordan, had spread themselves in the beautiful valley of Jezreel, which has been through many centuries, like poor little Belgium, the bat-

tlefield of the nations. All over this beautiful expanse of country the tents of the mighty hosts were pitched. Gorgeously bedecked camels, with chains of gold about their necks, silken tents, lavish display of jewelry marked the easy confidence and show of the mighty hosts. Sure of their prey and of their spoil, they gave themselves up to festivity and display. The news, or more likely the quick vision of some part of this great array came to our hero and stirred his mighty spirit. God himself touched that brave heroic heart, and while the sounds of revelry were heard throughout the enemy's camp, the keen and searching blast of a tiny horn rang out a signal call from one of the hills nearby. His own village heard the stirring note of that warlike summons, and came to the sound. It was a fine response, but how few seemed this little handful. Others, too, must be allowed to join in and share the danger and daring and the hope. Messengers were sent throughout the land, and a multitude gathered. Still they seemed so few, nor were they trained soldiers.

The heart of the general craved reassurance from God. Without divine aid it would

still be a hopeless fight, and without divine reassurance even the hero would hesitate. So in secret prayer once more "the mighty man of valor" begs for a sign. And with a bowl and a fleece he gains from God a promise and token of assurance and of victory. Hesitation disappears; courage rises; confidence animates; the morning comes and the great adventure must be made. About 32,000 men had gathered in response to the leader's call. They were, however, untrained and unprepared, and over against the mighty hosts of invaders they still seemed pitifully few. Now comes that strange intimation from God that even these were more than were needed to accomplish the victory. God spoke in the soul of the leader and said, "Israel might vaunt himself if he gained a victory with an army like this." God did not need so many. Boldly and confidently the general advised all who desired to go back home. Terrified at the large army of invaders, 22,000 were glad to return to the quiet of their homes; 10,000 remained. What could these do against a multitude? The strange dealing of God still goes on with the hero, and he is advised to sift out a few

of the choicest spirits even from the small number remaining. By a simple test proving foresight and confidence in the presence of danger a choice band of 300 only is selected. Those who remained were to be held in reserve for pursuit and for the finishing touches of the victory, but on the chosen 300 the surprise attack of the night was to devolve. From some height 300 picked and splendid men stood and looked down upon the beautiful valley, filled with the tents and trappings of a great and powerful army. What thoughts were theirs we cannot say, but no doubt the dauntless soul of their hero and leader had made every man of them as one with their chief. He was confident in the promise of God, and resolute with that splendid courage which had stamped him already as "a mighty man of valor." God was still gracious to him in the way of giving him encouragement, and suggested that with his armour-bearer alone he should, during the night, spy about the camp of the foe. A great risk it was, but he did not decline it, and the two of them, quietly moving near the guards, overheard one telling his companion a dream; how a coarse barley cake

had rolled against a tent and dashed it to the ground. Their own interpretation of this dream was that it meant the overthrow of their host at the hand of this already famous chieftain. Two things were brought to the leader's attention by this incident. One was that already there was a dread of him and his forces in the minds of his enemies. The other was a careful observation of the ground and a plan of attack.

There are many instances on record in history of great hosts of men who have been terrified and put to flight. So common was this in ancient times that the fright of a multitude earned the name of "panic" fear from the Greek word which means "all." It is a fearful thing to witness a panic. Fear communicates itself rapidly from one to another, and a whole crowd is thrown into confusion and terror. Losing their senses people seek refuge in flight. They tread upon one another, and sometimes from a very slight cause terrible disasters follow. Sometimes these panics have smitten great armies, even of brave men, and they have become demoralized, fleeing in terror from the field. A sudden

surprise in the night-time has more than once in the annals of warfare produced effects like this. Confident in God and in the skill and courage of his picked little band of men, the leader quickly makes his dispositions for a surprise. His 300 could make no headway in an open fight against a host, but if by some clever ruse he could manage to produce the impression that he was in command of a great and surrounding army, he might hope to throw the host into a panic. This was his plan. The story of his triumphant success is well known. All around the camp, here and there, upon some open space where a light could flash, he posted his men. Armed only with a hidden light, with a ringing trumpet, each one was suddenly to display his light, blow his trumpet, and join in a mighty shout, a slogan of victory. The ruse succeeded to the letter. That great host became smitten with panic fear. They thought they were surrounded by a multitude. From every side flashing lights, blowing trumpets, shouts of victory resounded. Losing all prudence and all command, leaving their tents and treasures, the great host sought safety in flight. They became an easy prey

to their pursuers, who now increased and redoubled as they joined in the chase of the frantic fugitives. Divided and scattered, the mighty army melted away. One part, under high command, was pursued and overthrown by a neighboring tribe of Israel. The other, perhaps the main one, was followed by the leader and his tireless band, who, faint yet pursuing, went on to complete the destruction so wonderfully begun.

Stern and cool, this man who was born for command rebukes and punishes the half-hearted, captures and slays the enemies of his people, allays with wise and diplomatic speech the discontent of some who felt aggrieved because they had not been summoned in the first instance. The conquering hero returns amid the acclamations of his rescued and grateful countrymen. Wild enthusiasm rings out when the hero is welcomed home. It was a great and splendid triumph. At once the people desired to make him king, permanent leader of their now delivered and restored country. But with modesty as great as his courage, and wisdom in government as well

as in war, he declines, and points them to God, to whom alone the victory was due.

Here, at the height of his triumph, we would willingly leave him. But alas! no human being, however great, is free from fault and weakness. Why should a selfish and unworthy thought creep into the mind of a great man at the very highest moment of his greatness? He would not have a crown, but with strange inconsistency he asks that he may be rewarded by the gift of the jewels captured from the foe. Spreading his garment upon the ground, he receives rings and jewels from the men who passed by and willingly threw them down to grant their leader's request. They act cheerfully, but he was wrong to ask and accept such a tribute. It was too small a thing for a great man to do. There was a worse element in it. Out of this spoil he made some sort of image or decorated robe, to serve as a kind of oracle. The vision vouchsafed him in the beginning of his career, and the signs graciously granted to encourage him were thus abused. Vanity and self-interest had turned his head. This beauteous creation of his greed and superstition became a snare to his own family



and to his people. Alas! his own sons became unworthy of him, and after his death his people fell again into idolatry and wickedness. Mournful indeed is it to wind up a career of glory with a hurtful fault like this. More than once in the sad history of mankind has a hero shown some fatal weakness and damaged his own influence and hurt the cause by his folly. Let such a painful and miserable ending of so great and splendid a career remind us of our constant need of God. The only safeguard for any man, however great he may be, is the presence and help of God, especially in the hour of his temptation. Vanity and superstition are not dead. Pride of achievement easily degenerates into selfishness, and the abuse of religious privilege may end in senseless and unworthy superstition.

From this shadowed close let us turn back to that brilliant beginning, that hour of loneliness and of destiny, when a hero met his God. It was a time when a man, in the ordinary pursuits of life, at a great crisis in his nation's life, met with his opportunity, divinely brought, seized the occasion, responded to the call of the Highest, and bravely went forth to accomplish

a mighty deliverance for his people and imperishable renown for himself. No later fault can wholly dim the glory of that time. Every man is at his best when, even in the simple tasks of life, his soul responds to the call of the divine, and whether on some great field and in some great emergency, or in a humble sphere and through the daily drudgery, he who hears and heeds the voice of God is the man of the hour.

The great world war has shown us that heroic courage and staunch patriotism are not of the past alone. In the annals of the older countries and our own new records of dauntless valor and splendid victory have been written. Oh! that these inspiring examples, ancient and modern, may not be lost upon those who have to fight in every age the battle of the Lord against the hosts of evil in all the earth!

The Son of God goes forth to war  
A kingly crown to gain;  
His blood-red banner streams afar;  
Who follows in His train?

## IX

### LESSONS FROM THE MINISTRY OF ELIJAH

Behold the word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? 1 Kings 19:9.

**T**HESE few but impressive words came to the great prophet of Israel at a critical juncture in his life and ministry. They bring him out of previous experiences to face the issues of the present hour. They recall him to his duty and his sphere of activity for God and man. We shall consider, however, the main incidents of Elijah's great career as recorded in 1 Kings 18:16 to 19:18.

The story of a great man at a great crisis is always interesting and instructive. The history of God's ancient people abounds with such cases. One of the most conspicuous is that of Elijah the Tishbite. He was an extraordinary character and he lived and acted at a period of great importance in the history of his people. His whole life and ministry are full of instruc-

tive interest, but in the limits of the passage chosen it is most intense. The salient features of this history may be presented under the three aspects of exaltation, depression and reassurance, as these successively had place in the experience of the man. This is not an uncommon circle for any man to tread; and it is especially likely to be the case with those who bear prominent part in religious life and movement. But even in the hidden recesses of individual Christian experience this same round is often measured over, and we may find encouragement and help in its manifestation in the story of the great Tishbite.

### I. EXALTATION

There was trouble in Israel. Ahab, selfish, weak and cruel, was under the influence of Jezebel, his wicked queen. Too often the history of nations has presented the striking but painful figure of a strong, bad, vindictive woman at the head of powerful forces. It is a common remark that when a woman is bad she is very bad. A few of the notably wicked women of history stand out with painful prominence as a disgrace to their sex. Ahab, king of Israel,

had unhappily allied himself with a woman of this kind. Shrewd, intelligent, capable, and cruel—she was the guiding and corrupting spirit of the government. To one thing she had set herself, which was to uproot the religion of Israel and substitute the heathen divinities of her own country in place of Jehovah, the true and living God. Along with this she was determined to build up the wealth and power of the king, her husband, and in carrying out this design she stuck at no cruelty or rapacity.

For the sins of king and people, God once again smote the land with famine. Introducing this new appearance of the dreaded scourge, there comes on the scene a marked and wonderful man; a prophet, sent of God, to denounce and rebuke leaders and people for their religious decay and moral corruption. The man of God bursts unexpectedly upon the scene. Shaggy, with long flowing hair, wrapped in a coarse cloak of camel's hair cloth, stern, uncompromising, magnificent, he accosts the king with this denunciation, "There shall be no rain for three years except at my word." Conscious that God was speaking through him, and that he was but the

messenger of the King of kings, he faltered not to deliver his stern and searching message. So for the three weary years a parched land suffers once more under withering drought. The herbage failed, the springs ran dry, the cisterns were unreplenished, the people and the animals alike were perishing with thirst and hunger. In one way and another God took care of his messenger. And the mighty prophet, now by the instincts of the birds of the air and now at the gentle hands of an impoverished widow, in the providence of God, is miraculously sustained. The weary three years' period finally comes towards its end. The scourge of God has been felt. The pious in the land have prayed through the suffering seasons, and the day of their deliverance is coming. Penitent, not a few find their sorrowful way back to the living God. Perhaps the mighty prophet thought that even the forces of evil had been shaken and the time had come to make a public test and clear the land of idolatry and decay. Rough and imperious still, he orders the weak and yet not incapable king to summon the priests of the hated religion, the favorites of the

wicked queen, to test the issue in a mighty meeting on Carmel's jagged height.

One of the most vivid descriptions in all literature is that which is brought to us of this great occasion. The simple narrative of the Bible is sublime and striking. No one can tell it better than the sacred historian has done. We recall the description which here may only be touched upon. All day long the assembled multitude of priests called in vain upon their god for some display of power to convince the people that their religion was the right one. Morning came to noon, and noon declined until the long shadows were beginning to stretch along the coast, by the peaks of Carmel, and over the beautiful, though now blistered, valley of Jezreel. Grand and strong the mighty old prophet calls upon Jehovah to show himself by an unmistakable sign as the true God for Israel and the world. Nor does he ask in vain. The lightning, herald of the coming storm, guided from God, finds the wet altar and kindles it into flame. A mighty shout rises from the assembled crowd—"Jehovah, he is God." Turning in wrath upon the defeated priests of heathenism, the crowd visits swift and terrible

punishment upon them all. Meantime the weary but triumphant prophet goes with his servant to the top of the mountain to look out towards the western sea to perceive whether the electric storm portended the rising cloud. And yonder, far away, like a scrap no bigger than a man's hand, the coming rain shows its first faint sign. Now at last the three years' drought is to be broken. Forgetful of his fatigue, if he even felt it, the tough son of the desert girds his flowing robe around his waist and dashes with the swift speed of the desert runner before the chariot of the defeated and humbled king toward the capital city. Down pours the rain in such a torrent as has never been witnessed before. The mighty man of God felt assured of victory.

Here let us pause and reflect. This is the summit of Elijah's exaltation. He seemed to have everything before him. The people had shouted their enthusiastic approval of him and renewed their allegiance to God. The rain had come down in torrents to refresh the long wasted earth. The prophet, victorious but weary, comes to the capital of the kingdom. With what a glow of rejoicing, with what exaltation of spirits,



he must have reached the city. His fidelity has been rewarded, his glowing zeal has found response, his faith in God has been justified. We can imagine his joy and triumph in this hour. Nothing sweeter ever comes to a man than the hour in which his long and painful advocacy of righteous things seems to come to its fruition. In greater or less degree all leaders have such moments. These victorious hours in the midst of an arduous career are resting places for faith and confidence. Yet there ever lurks here a hidden peril, a peril which grows out of the reaction of the soul that has been strained to a tense and exalted experience, through the weariness of body and exhaustion of nerve that must follow such tension; and the peril is increased when it must be remembered that no such victory as that of Elijah could ever be complete. The forces of evil, silenced for a moment, are not put out of existence. The slaying of the priests of Baal did not mean necessarily rooting out all idolatrous influence among the people. Popular applause does not always signify a real change in the habits of thought or in the

moral character of the people. The reaction must come.

## II. DEPRESSION

We may imagine Elijah, wearied but hopeful, waiting for a day or longer, in the capital, hoping for some movement of the people or of the rebuked king, to result in the great religious change which he so earnestly desired. But while he waits, the vindictive spirit of that terrible woman, his sworn enemy and the enemy of God, flashes up in a flame of hate and resistless wrath. Pity that such a dauntless spirit was lodged in a character so corrupt. What a woman she would have been if she had been good! Swearing a terrible oath, she sends a message to the strong man that in twenty-four hours his life would pay the penalty of his daring. Would he quail or stand? A great crisis was there. Would he give way, or, like others of his kind even greater, would he lose his head before he would sacrifice his principles? Alas! human nature proves too weak at the strain, and he who had stood heroic and grand, alone in a crowd, undaunted before a king, trembled in his soul before a wom-

an's word, and turned in flight. Oh! fatal weakness at a critical moment.

Far yonder to the south, across the desert, a lonely man lies prostrate in the heat, under the scanty shade of a desert bush. The shaggy hair all tangled, the hairy coat all rumpled, the prostrate figure itself a crumpled thing instead of a tower of strength. Let us hear him as his crushed and broken spirit complains. It is the same tongue, but not the same voice that was heard summoning the people to their God. The manly tones have sunk to a whining whisper as the defeated and humiliated hero recognizes his fault and pleads to be dismissed from the scene. It was borne in upon his soul that though God had summoned him to a great task he himself was only human, no better than his brethren, no better than his rebellious and faint-hearted fathers. He feels that his work is a failure, his life a blunder, his whole manhood sunken and gone.

Let us approach and listen. The form indeed is that of Elijah. Can we recognize the voice? It does not sound as it did when in bold challenge he dared Ahab to his face, not as when in earnest appeal he pleaded

with the people to return to God, not as when in cruel scorn he taunted the baffled priests of Baal, not as when in rapt supplication he poured out his soul to God that he would declare himself to his people. No; the voice has sunk to a low wail of despair and the burden of his request finds utterance in these pathetic words: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." We ask in amazement, Is this possible? Can this be the same man? But before our wonder passes into censure, let us take thought of the patience of God. Where would any of us be if God did not bear with our faults, our failures; if God did not rescue us from our own painful reactions and give us another chance? Can we not understand Elijah's plaintive cry? It was the moan of a brave spirit crushed with defeat and mortification. Often do good men and true in the crises of life and after a bold stand suffer some failing of nerve, and fall. Then comes chagrin, despair. And it is all the more bitter if, as in Elijah's case, there has been great seeming success and exaltation of spirits just before. We cannot fail to comprehend in some measure

Elijah's state of mind; but we need not approve it. On the contrary we should condemn it. We feel the force of James' declaration that, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are." So we can deplore his fall, and humbly learn a lesson from it. So quickly does night come after the day, and the brighter the day has been the darker seems the night!

### III. REASSURANCE.

Again the scene changes. God has not forgotten to be gracious, even though his chosen servant, a mighty man, had broken down and failed at a critical moment. Here in the desert, under the shade, God speaks with him, provides him miraculously with necessary food, cheers him with his presence, and strengthens him in body that he might make the long journey to another place. Fear drives him still further, but he is beginning to find himself. Far across the desert he pursues his way down to that silent mountain where ages before God had spoken face to face with Moses—Horeb, the Mount of God. What associations cluster about this place! It was here that Moses saw the burning bush and in weak-

ness and trembling was sent on his perilous mission to Egypt. It was here that later on he smote the rock and brought forth the water to revive the perishing and murmuring people. Here also was Sinai with its wonderful memories of law and death! Here then we find our prophet next, hiding in a cave. Then comes the searching question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

He, like Moses, meets God in this mountain country. He recounts his zeal for the Lord. He tells the mournful story of apostasy and downfall. He piteously describes himself as the last weak fugitive of what was once God's people. "And they seek my life to take it away!" But the command is for him to stand upon the Mount of God. Then comes that wonderful interview. The rending mountains and crushing rocks as they are torn and shaken by wind and earthquake tell of the presence of Jehovah; but yet, "The Lord was not in the wind," nor the earthquake. Then came flashing fires, as once before here in Horeb, the symbol of God's consuming might. "But the Lord was not in the fire." The grand old prophet doubtless stood awed, but not terrified by these splendors. He

might quail and flee before Jezebel's anger, but he was not afraid to be alone amid crashing mountains with Jehovah. These show him God's awful might; and yet they are not the last expression of God's working against sin. "And after the fire a still small voice." God was there. "And it was so that when Elijah heard it he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entering in of the cave." It was his rebuke. He meekly receives it. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Not by great victories and alarming displays, but by quiet and blessed influences is God's work to be done. Elijah repeats his tale of woe and trouble. But God commissions him to new and continued duties. He cannot yet spare his servant and will, when the time comes, take him to himself in a nobler way than he had asked for.

Instructed by these lessons, Elijah must return to his place and his people. But before dismissing him the Lord rebukes his faintheartedness and rekindles his energies and hopefulness by the glad announcement, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Is-

rael, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal.”

Thus Elijah was reminded that things were not so bad in Israel as in his extreme depression he had supposed. He must go back among his people and ally himself with that minority which still stood for religion and truth. He must be their leader and no more run away and leave them, supposing himself to be alone. If his exaltation at Carmel had lifted him too high, his depression in the wilderness had sunk him too low. He must find the middle ground. It is not too much optimism on the one hand, nor too much pessimism on the other that makes for success.

In accordance with this principle Elijah is instructed on his return to make provision for the continuance of the prophetic office and of the religious life in Israel. He is to find Elisha, the son of Shaphat, whom he must call to be his follower and upon whom afterward the spirit of Elijah shall descend that he might carry on the work of the prophet after his glorious translation to heaven. Nor is this all. On his way back he must anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. He is to be the scourge of Ahab and



his people. Elijah must be reminded that God overrules the affairs of men, that he makes the wrath of man to praise him and uses for the chastening of his people the rod which his enemies furnish. Elijah might shrink, but God is not dead. In Israel he has his people. Over the world he has his way. God rules in the affairs of men and cares for the humble and trustful who in bad times maintain their touch with God and hold fast the treasure of divine truth and life.

Is this all that earth shall see of Elijah? No. Far down the centuries, once more upon a mountain top, that majestic figure will reappear to human vision. Three disciples shall see three figures. Moses, Elijah and Jesus will appear to the dazed and wondering eyes of three men, half awake, yet fully conscious of a glorious vision. Somehow these three will recognize the great personality of the ancient prophet as he comes to join with the mighty law-giver in conversation respecting the coming departure of the Saviour himself. Three mountain-top experiences stand out in the life of this man: Carmel, the scene of his triumph, which ended in disappoint-

ment; Sinai, the scene of his rebuke, which brought new activity and showed the right way to work for God; and the Mount of Transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah mingled their counsel and encouragement to cheer the human Christ in view of his own coming death and resurrection.

Many important and powerful lessons come to us as we follow the story of that great life. One above all lingers with us as it is drawn by the inspired hand, in words which remind us that Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves, yet he was a mighty man of prayer. It is not for us to be great as he was great, yet all of us are human as he was human. The greatest are faulty; so are we. Yet from the souls of weak and even unworthy men prayers that reach the throne of God may ascend.

“More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

## X

### SOVEREIGNTY IN SALVATION

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. Hebrews 2:10.

THE text fully and beautifully implies the absolute sovereignty of God. His name is not mentioned, but he is described as one for whom all things exist and by whom all things came into being. He is the origin and the end of all things. This thought is concentrated into the statement, that in accomplishing the salvation of sinners he is the supreme actor, and that the sovereign act of salvation is brought to its accomplishment by the provision of a perfect Saviour. Not the free will of man, not even the voluntary self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ, can conflict with, much less overthrow, the supreme fact that the salvation of men is a sovereign action of God. So far from being a harsh and forbidding doctrine, this truth should be and is fraught with sweet and strong

consolation. The thoughts of the text bring out and enforce this divine sovereignty very plainly and in several ways.

### I. GOD BRINGS MANY SONS UNTO GLORY

Here answer is made to the earnest question of the disciples when once they asked, "Lord, are there many that be saved?" At that time Jesus did not answer the question directly, but urged upon his hearers that the way to death was broad and easy and the way to life was narrow and difficult, so that it was incumbent upon each one to strive to enter in. Many indeed are lost. This thought should fill us with sorrow and impel us to earnest efforts to make known the saving grace of God. But let us gladly rejoice in the multitude of the saved. It is not a struggling few, but a glorious company of the redeemed who shall reach the eternal rest and glory of the heavenly world. This vision of the saved many was vouchsafed to John in the visions given to him on the Isle of Patmos. In Revelation 7:9 we are told of the multiplied thousands who praise God and rejoice together. It is a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people.

These are more than saved. Our text tells us they are sons. We must not think of salvation, either in its beginning here or its completion hereafter, as being merely deliverance from the burden and the penalty of sin. It is entrance into the filial relationship with God and the development of that sonship to its perfection in the eternal life. To receive the blessing of sonship now and in the consciousness of it to come to God as our Father (Rom. 8:14, 15) is one of the most precious of the believer's privileges. This consciousness of sonship to God, mediated to us through the saving work of Christ and wrought into our own thought and feeling by the action of the Holy Spirit, grows to its fullest realization in the future life.

This is shown to us in our text by the use of the word "glory." In a former discourse this term was expounded as carrying with it the idea of a state of consummate excellence. Here let us recall some of the things involved in this general conception. In the Scriptures the glory of God is a frequent expression for the highest dignity and excellence of the divine nature and person. So also the thought of

glory as a state of human perfection involves the vision and enjoyment of God. The old theologians had an expression for that. They called it the beatific vision, the thought of seeing God in his beauty as the Psalmist indicates (Psalm 27:4). We can only describe these things in terms of our present experience and language. Glory is to see God in all the perfection of his being and of his nature. Moreover, as John tells us, it is to be partakers in our measure of that glory. When we see him as he is, we shall be like him (1 John 3:2).

Glory also means the triumph of Christ's kingdom and redemption. Those who are brought as sons unto this state of supreme felicity share in the joy and triumph of the Saviour. He, for the joy that was set before him (Heb. 12:2) endured the cross; and that joy would be the triumph of the cross. So they who shall be brought to share in the final reality of redemption shall see the thing which they loved and worked for in its victorious consummation, and their own deliverance fully accomplished with that of the redeemed multitude. We must always remember that salvation, while necessarily personal, is not

selfish. It must be both individual and social. It would not be a joyous heaven unless others with ourselves were saved. Heaven is no lonely condition. Every one who is redeemed rejoices in the redemption of all the rest. It is wrong in thought or feeling to separate these things, for they cannot be separated. One of our beautiful hymns reminds us of the "social joys" in the golden Jerusalem. To be a sharer in a perfect state is indeed a blessing beyond words.

Hence we are brought to consider that the glory to which the sons of God are brought means the expansion and perfection of their own personal excellences. It means the full attainment of all our best hopes and aspirations. It holds before us the entrancing conception of a conscious realization of our best selves. It means that the soul can at last be perfectly satisfied with itself where self-satisfaction can not be itself a sin.

## II. GOD MAKES THE CAPTAIN OF THEIR SALVATION PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING

The sovereignty of God in saving men is brought out in the method he has chosen

for the accomplishment of that divine purpose. Men having neither wisdom nor virtue sufficient to accomplish their own salvation by coming of themselves unto glory, God provides for them a Saviour. He is called "the Captain of their salvation." The Greek word here means more than that military term would suggest. It describes one who takes the lead in anything, and so an author or originator, one who comes to be the chief leader or the prince; and it is thus that Jesus is here described. In the matter of saving men from their sins and bringing them to their perfection, he takes the lead and accomplishes the fact. Thus it is not merely salvation in the abstract which God provides, but a personal living Saviour, a founder, a leader, a perfecter of the great process and consummation which we understand by the one word salvation. We need continually to emphasize this fact in our thinking and in our deepest consciousness of religion. The reality of it and the final fulfilment of it grow out of our personal union with the Saviour. Salvation is not the result of a mere intellectual process of accepting a truth or a set of truths, nor of feelings of depression and



relief in regard to sin. Everywhere our Lord himself, and those who have taught us of him, make this emphatic. His constant plea is to believe in him, to trust him, to come to him. To sum it up in a phrase: Salvation is by a Saviour.

Our text tells us that he is a perfect Saviour, as it is said elsewhere, "able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto him." Notice that the word "perfect" here describes his perfection in office rather than in character. He was a perfect man, he is a perfect man; and with this he is a perfect Saviour. He was perfectly fitted to be the Saviour of men from sin, as one may be perfectly fitted for some great office and duty. The text tells us how the Captain of our salvation was thus perfectly fitted for his task of saving men. It is a wondrous thought; it was through sufferings. He could not have been a perfect Saviour without the sorrows through which he passed.

We are not left at a loss with regard to the nature and meaning of the sufferings which he endured in order that through them he might be a perfect Saviour. In the context, in other places throughout the

Epistle to the Hebrews, and in other Scriptures, the meaning of this profound statement is made clear and emphatic. We may summarize it by saying that Jesus suffered death, in order that he might deliver from death; and temptation, that he might deliver from temptation.

He suffered death. And this means not only the pain and trial of death whether anticipated or actually endured in the final conflict, but death with its religious connotation, death as a penalty, death as the consequence of sin. This is made clear to us in the verse which immediately precedes our text, that "because of the suffering of death, he was crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man." Whatever death means as a pain and penalty to human nature, that Jesus endured because he had taken upon himself that human nature and identified himself with it in its pains and penalties. This is indeed a wondrous statement that he tasted death for every man. It was as if he suffered the accumulated pain of each and every man's death. And this, as we learn from other Scriptures, means that he was man's

substitute; that in his own death he offered a sacrifice for sin, thus taking the guilty sinner's place. More definitely is this brought out in Heb. 7:26, 27: "For such a high priest became us....who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all when he offered up himself." Again in Heb. 10:4-10, the sacrificial meaning and voluntary character of our Lord's death are set forth, the statement closing with the words that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." In many other Scriptures this great truth is solemnly declared. Jesus himself spoke of giving himself a ransom for many. Paul builds the great argument of Romans around the sacrificial death of Christ, and through all the New Testament this truth is again and again brought to the front. That this death of Christ is the ground of a real deliverance from sin also appears in many of these passages. Further along in this chapter we are told that Jesus became partaker of the humanity of man that through death he might bring to naught

him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. This does not mean only the deliverance from the dread of death as a calamity but from the consequences of death in all its spiritual darkness and suffering. The teaching, then, is that Jesus could not have been a perfect Saviour from death and its consequences unless he himself had endured death and have found in it the bitter cup from which he shrank in Gethsemane and yet accepted as the necessary condition of salvation to mankind.

The other form of suffering suggested in the context is that of temptation. The greatest sorrow of humanity is its conflict with sin. All through the course of human history this is the shadow that falls, this is the burden that oppresses, this is the sting that pierces, this is the horror that alarms, this is the failure that shames, this is the disappointment that grieves. All that sin means in human consciousness, in human life, in human history, in human punishment by death and after death, this is the distinctive human sorrow.

We fall into sin through temptation. Our first parents fell in that way and all men and women have fallen in that way ever since the first sin. And Jesus could not have been a perfect Saviour from sin unless he had been tempted and have conquered temptation, just as he died and yet conquered death. So in the beautiful language with which this second chapter closes, we are told "It behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." His temptation was not a mere show: it was the agony of a wrestling human soul. He was sinless because he conquered sin. It was somehow necessary that it should be a real temptation to him in order that his victory over it might be a real victory for himself and for us. All that was human in him gathered itself in strength to withstand the onslaught of the tempter. Thanks be to God he came off victor there, but it was not without suffering on his part. He did not

wave the tempter away by the hand of divine sovereignty, but met him like a human hero and drove him conquered from the field. So he becomes our refuge in temptation. He knows what it means to be tempted, though he did not know what it was to fall. Yet our falls invite his sympathy and receive it. He looked upon Peter and the shamed apostle went out into the dark and wept. He restored him to his love in the scene at the lakeside and appointed him the guide of his sheep. Thousands of those who have known Christ's saving grace have also comfortably acknowledged the strength of his saving power in temptation. He knows to the uttermost what we are, and therefore he can save to the uttermost those who come unto God by him. Thus through the suffering of temptation and of death he was made a perfect Saviour, perfect in sympathy, and perfect in sacrifice. It was God who so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son who made such a deliverance through him possible. And so we come back to the point from which we started—the providing of a perfect Saviour through whom many sons may be brought unto glory is

the outflow and effect of sovereign grace. One thought remains.

### III. AS CREATOR AND SOVEREIGN GOD IS GLORIFIED IN THIS WORK

Striking indeed is the expression here. Such a mode of procedure, it is said, “became him.” It was perfectly suited to the dignity and the character of God to bring many sons unto glory by perfecting for them a Saviour through the discipline of suffering. Let your minds dwell on this point. This way of salvation for men *became* God. What poor judges we are of what is becoming to God! Who are we to say that such a course of action was not in accordance with the highest ideal we can form of God? It is a sorrowful fact that all along from the first promulgation of the gospel men have been found who objected to this plan of salvation as unbecoming to God. In unforgettable language Paul tells us this in 1 Corinthians 1:23: “We preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness.” To the one class the cross of Christ was an offense. Pilate realized this when he refused to alter the inscription over the

cross. The Jews were horrified that one who claimed to be their Messiah and their King should suffer the death of a criminal under Roman government. And as they were in some sense accomplices to the deed, all the more was it an offense to them to have it proclaimed of them, as Peter did, that though they through lawless hands crucified their Lord, God had on that account appointed him a Prince and a Saviour. And the offense of the cross has not ceased except to those who have found it the power of God unto salvation. There is even a dainty phase of Christian thought that shrinks from the cross and the blood. Too often to others than scandalized Jews it is true that the atonement by blood has become an occasion of annoyance and of criticism, instead of acceptance and of joy.

Then there is the wisdom of the world that looks upon this way of salvation as a folly. The supercilious Greek and the haughty Roman alike turned away from the preaching of the cross of Christ. To them it seemed absurd that deity should be reduced to an expedient like this to purge away human sin and effect reconciliation between God and man. Alas, it must be



confessed that the successors of these philosophers are still among us. There are many who take that position today, attacking the justice of the divine procedure and frankly rejecting it because of its apparent inadequacy.

We oppose to both of these misconceptions the simple statement of the text and the trend of New Testament teaching elsewhere. So far from being unworthy of God, we are here told that this divine, sovereign procedure became him. Think of what that means, that a course of conduct and action should be exactly what is becoming to the great God, the ideal of wisdom and justice and love. Let us simply think what we mean by the word "becoming." We see a lovely woman beautifully attired, and we say her dress becomes her. It suits all her charms to be clothed as she is. It enhances them. And thus becomingly dressed she appears in the social circle radiant and fair in her beauty. We take a high-minded honorable gentleman, devoted to everything that is noble and pure and unselfish and strong; he adopts in difficult times a certain line of conduct, and we say he has acted becomingly. He

has done what a gentleman ought to do under the circumstances in which he was placed. Such a line of action and only such a line of action became him. But how imperfect are such illustrations when we come to think of what is becoming to God. What beautifies his beauty and glorifies his glory, what meets the requirements of his justice, what answers the demands of his wisdom, what enhances the perfection of his holiness and adorns the unspeakable fullness of his love—that is becoming to God. And here we are told that to provide through sufferings a perfect Saviour who should lead the children of men into the glory of heaven and of eternal salvation was an action becoming to God.

Shall we not, therefore, accept that which is becoming to God? In this great essential truth of our religion we find our confidence and our hope. That which was an offense to the Jew and a folly to the Greek has been proved to be the power of God unto salvation to thousands and thousands of all ages and times. It does not lose its power today. The simple child sorrowing for its conscious sins may here find forgiveness and strength. The man stained

and blurred with the conflicts of sin has often found here his pardon and peace. The aged saint goes tottering to the grave leaning with assurance upon the divine promise. Here the aching heart of humanity has found its healing balm. Here the utmost agonies of suffering and of death have been met and overcome. Here the fadeless hope of eternal life has sprung up in the soil of our earthliness and blossoms into fragrance and beauty. Here mind and heart alike find their resting place in the sovereign, saving grace of God.

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